



Th
BIB
ZOO



ALBERT C. M

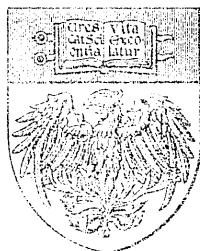
The
BLE
OO



C. MACKINNON

PRESENTED TO THE LIBRARY BY
MR. AND MRS. JESSE L. ROSENBERGER
TO AID AS MANY AS IT MAY

The University of Chicago
Libraries



GIFT OF

Mr. & Mrs. J. L. Rosenberger



THE BIBLE ZOO

THE BIBLE ZOO

A SERIES OF ADDRESSES TO YOUNG
PEOPLE ON SOME BIRDS, BEASTS,
AND INSECTS OF THE BIBLE

BY

ALBERT GLENTHORNE MACKINNON, M.A.

Author of

"Spiritually Fit, a Young Man's Equipment"

"Tangible Tests, for a Young Man's Faith"

"Truths of To-day, a Young Man's Creed"



NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

311
VIRGO VMO
70

VIRGO COASTING

BSGG3
TRA

CONTENTS

I

THE BIRD HOUSE

	PAGE
1. THE RAVEN.	11
2. THE EAGLE	17
3. THE QUAIL	22
4. THE CUCKOO	30
5. THE HERON	38
6. THE OSTRICH	46
7. THE DOVE	53
8. THE SPARROW	58
9. THE STORK	64

II

THE INSECT HOUSE

10. THE FLY	73
11. THE CATERPILLAR	79
12. THE ANT	84
13. THE WASP	98
14. THE BEE	110
15. THE BEETLE	117
16. THE MOTH	124

					PAGE
17.	THE LOCUST	.	.	.	129
18.	THE EARWIG	.	.	.	136
19.	THE MOSQUITO	.	.	.	142
20.	THE MOLLUSCA	.	.	.	148
21.	THE SPIDER	.	.	.	154
22.	THE WORM .	.	.	.	167

III

THE LION'S HOUSE

23.	THE LION .	.	.	.	177
24.	THE BEAR .	.	.	.	184
25.	THE LEOPARD	.	.	.	190
26.	THE WOLF .	.	.	.	195
27.	THE SERPENT	.	.	.	200

IV

THE OUTSIDE PADDOCKS

28.	THE DOG .	.	.	.	207
29.	THE LAMB .	.	.	.	213
30.	THE BULL OF BASHAN	.	.	.	218
31.	THE GOAT .	.	.	.	224
32.	THE HIPPOPOTAMUS.	.	.	.	230
33.	THE CAMEL	.	.	.	235
34.	THE FOX .	.	.	.	239

PREFACE

COME with me, children, for a stroll through the Zoological Gardens of Scripture. The Bible is full of animals, birds, and insects. Its pages are like true photographs ; and though the people in those days may not have thought about the dumb creatures in the kindly way we do, they are not overlooked by the sacred writers.

As we take our walk through these Bible grounds I want you to listen to all the sermons preached to us by the inhabitants of this Zoo. Of course they cannot talk, so I will have to be their mouth-piece. While you look at the different beasts and birds I will tell you the message that each one has for us.

Sometimes I will put it in story form, just as if we understood all that they were saying to one another. Perhaps in this way we will get into closer sympathy and touch with their daily life. For after all, if we only watch them closely we soon learn much of their language.

Again I will make you do some of the talking ; because I know that it is tiresome always to be listening. In this way I hope that we will spend a pleasant hour or two together, and come back from our walk with a new reverence for God's creatures, and with many helps and hints for our own life gathered from the sermons of these dumb preachers.

Which shall we visit first ? Here is the " Bird House " : let us enter it.

I

THE BIRD HOUSE

“Do you ne’er think what wondrous beings these?
Do you ne’er think who made them, and who taught
The dialect they speak where melodies
Alone are the interpreters of thought?
Whose household words are songs in many keys,
Sweeter than instrument of man e’er caught!”

I

THE RAVEN

WHAT a dull world this would be without the birds ! The Bible too would lose some of its charm for children and grown-up people if, as we read its pages, we did not catch a glimpse of their fluttering wings and hear the music of their song.

“ What is the use of them ? ” you ask.

Sometimes at daylight you have wakened up very cross because their noisy twitter had disturbed your sleep. Yes, but have you heard them singing on a bright spring morning ? You were glad to feel the warm sunshine after the cold winds of winter, and as you hurried to school, and saw the primroses blooming, a strange happiness sent a glow of pleasure through you ; but perhaps in your haste you forgot to thank God for the warmth of the cloudless sky and the beauty of the fresh fields. It would be sad if He did not get a word of thanks for His goodness. And so the birds have to make up for your neglect. Just listen to them. They are

The Bible Zoo

bursting their little hearts with joy, and their throats swell out as they try their very hardest to tell God how happy they are, and praise Him for making the earth so sweet.

Birds and children have one duty in common. What is that? To cheer old people, or those who have grown sad with the sorrows of life. And the former, at least, do their part faithfully. But God has given them other work, and it is about this that I am going to speak. He has made them His preachers. They have all got a separate lesson to teach us. Now, where can we best learn its meaning? Just from the Bible, which is man's greatest storehouse of knowledge. We are going to see what use God makes of the birds in that book, and so we will speak first of

The Restless Raven

1. I call the raven *restless* because of the first picture we get of it in the eighth chapter of Genesis. The flood has been a long time on the earth, and Noah and his family have been shut up in the floating ark; but at last the rain stops, and the water begins to go down. It is then that Noah opens a window, and taking a raven in his hand he lets it go. How glad it is to spread out its wings once more. Off it flies,

and Noah watches it as it goes farther and farther away, until it becomes but a black speck ; and then it disappears, never to return. At first it would be so wild with glee at getting its liberty that it would never think in what direction it was going ; but too late, when it began to get weary and saw nothing but water on every side, with no place on which it could rest, it would perhaps try to return only to discover that it had lost the way. Poor, foolish raven ! On, on it must wander now ! Its wings grow heavier, and it cannot rise so high ; and soon it becomes so tired that it can scarcely keep above the surface of the sea. At last its feathers touch the waves ; and then, worn out, it falls into the water and is drowned.

That is a picture, boys and girls, of the restless sinner, who turns away from Christ, the Ark of Refuge. Whenever you forget Jesus, and think only of your own pleasure, and do just what you want without regarding God's wish, you are like that raven hurrying away from its only shelter. On and on sin will tempt you, until at last you lose sight of Christ ; and then, weary and guilty, you will perish out in the cold. Take care, therefore, never to wander from Jesus, or you will become like another restless, foolish raven.

2. The *rescuing* raven is what I would call the

next picture which we get of this bird. You will read about it in 1 Kings xvii. Elijah was sent by God to hide amongst the rocks beside a little stream named Cherith. Of course he could get nothing to eat there, for he was at a great distance from any house, and the place was so wild that no fruit grew near it. What was he to do? Many a man of less faith would have refused to go; but Elijah believed God, and obeyed His command. As he sat on the stones all alone, we can imagine him feeling hungry, and wondering how he was to get food. Then he would see a little dark object in the sky coming nearer and nearer. It was a raven, and it dropped a piece of bread just beside him; another and another followed, and soon Elijah had enough to eat.

You see God can make even the ravens His messengers; and if He uses them, do you not think He has something for you to do? Yes, He wants to send you this very hour, like those birds, to feed the hungry. There are millions of people starving for the Bread of Life. Will you be one of God's rescuing ravens to carry them food? How can you do it is perhaps what you ask me. You have not wings to fly away to Africa or India or China, where those heathen are. Perhaps some day, when you are big

enough, you may go as a missionary ; but just now you can give your pennies and your prayers, and God will make wings of them to carry the knowledge of Christ and His Cross to those who know Him not.

3. The *revenging* raven is the third kind that the Bible speaks of. Turn up Proverbs xxx. 17 and you will read, " The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out."

If God employs the ravens as angels of mercy, you see He also uses them as avengers of sin. In this picture it is the eye that does wrong, and therefore it is the eye that is punished. God teaches us by this a great truth, that wrongdoing brings its own ruin. Let me put it this way, and I think you will understand my meaning. There is a boy that likes to make fun of others. He is always watching for something in his companions at which he can laugh. If he yields to that bad habit, very soon he will lose the power of seeing what is good and noble in his friends and in the world. His sin, in fact, like the raven, will have plucked out his vision. Watch, then, lest the sins you think so little of just now come back again like those black, cruel birds and destroy all that is beautiful in your soul.

4. The *rebuking* raven is the fourth one that

speaks to us from Scripture. Christ has made that bird preach us a sermon of contentment and faith. Men are apt to think that ravens only croak ; well, they would caw to some purpose if we would only listen to what they can tell us. Have you ever watched a crow ? There is something very calm, dignified, satisfied about it. I think Christ must have taken note of that when, pointing to this type of bird, He said : " Consider the ravens : for they neither sow nor reap ; which neither have storehouse nor barn ; and yet God feedeth them : how much more are ye better than the fowls ? "

" Trust God, and He will clothe you and feed you." These are the words Christ has put into the mouth of the raven, and they should make many a wise man blush for shame. People who are always fretting about the future, or who are discontented, should keep a raven in their house, that it might repeat this sermon to them. Now, if you are ever tempted to get cross because you are not allowed to do as you wish, or begin to cry because your father has refused you a new dress or toy, remember Christ's words, " Consider the raven " ; and as you glance at that old-fashioned bird, I am sure you will see a look of reproach in its eye, and be more ready to accept with gratitude the daily gifts of God.

II

THE EAGLE

THE Bible has a great deal to say about the eagle. In fact, the sermons which it makes that bird preach are very startling and also very comforting, and I am sure that after you have listened to its message you will take a more kindly interest in this king of the air.

1. The first thing about the eagle that impresses one is its *strength*. Its powerful beak, its great sinewy talons, the force of its big wings show how strong it is. You have read how it can carry lambs—yes, and little children—away to its nest. God makes use of this creature to tell us something about Himself. He said to people of old, “I bear you on eagles’ wings.” The power of God might make us afraid were it not that He employs it to help us. He reminds the Israelites that when the way seemed blocked to them He lifted them above all difficulties. That is what He is willing to do to-day for you. Perhaps you have some burden very heavy to carry. Your task is very hard, and you feel

as if you could not do it. There is a sorrow in your heart that makes you feel lonely. The hand of Scripture points you to that eagle yonder. Look at it. It has spread out its wide wings and is soaring up to its nest. But see, there is something on them. Why, can it be baby eagles? Yes, it is. They are too weak to fly so high, and this is the way the mother lifts them. It is the way also that God helps you. You would like to climb up to heights of holiness, love, and faith; but it is so hard. Well, you must learn sometimes to let God carry you. Ask Him and you will find out how easy it is.

The Bible makes use of the eagle's strength to tell us another very helpful truth. When people get old they begin to lose their strength, and sigh for their youth. While it is true that our bodies will get weak with age, yet it need not be so with our souls. David was able to sing, when speaking of God's goodness to His people, "So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." He had felt that himself, and when he wanted to tell others about it, he tried hard to think how he could best explain the new spirit and energy God had given him in his old age, so he likened it to the strength of the eagle. Now it may be a long time before you grow white-

haired and feeble, but you need this power if you are to be successful in life ; so begin at once and seek it from God.

2. The *stirring* of the nest is the second lesson we learn from the eagle, and again in it we get a glimpse of the divine mind. In Deut. xxxii. 11 we read : " As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings : so the Lord alone did lead him." Does that not at first seem cruel ? There is the nest with all the little eaglets in it. As they snuggle up to each other they look so cosy and warm that it seems a great pity to disturb them. Besides, they have never yet learned to fly, and the ground is so far, far below them that if they fell all that distance they would be sure to be killed. Perhaps sometimes they have just peeped over their nest and then drawn back their little heads with fright, because they were so high up. But here comes the mother ; and what does she do ? She takes no notice of their crying, but begins actually to throw them out of their warm home. Poor little birdies ! There they are falling, falling. See, they have got their tiny wings out at last, and are working them as fast as they can, and yet are fluttering away down like leaves. Watch the mother ;

she is not so hardhearted as you thought. She is bending her head and stretching out her big wings, and now she swoops down right below her young ones, and catches them before they strike the ground. After all, she was just giving them a first lesson in flying. God does the same to us. He has given us wings of faith and of love and of work, and He wants us to use them. So He comes and disturbs our home. It is not nice at first. The sorrow or disappointment is hard to bear, but it is thus we discover and put into exercise the spiritual powers He has given us.

3. *Swift*ness is a third thing about the eagle that the Bible mentions. "Riches fly away as an eagle towards heaven" is what Solomon says, and many a wise man since his day has repeated the same truth. See the eagle rise. It darts upward with a swish of its wings, and in a few seconds becomes a mere speck in the sky, and soon disappears from sight. All earthly things will vanish like that. So the Bible warns us not to put our trust in them. Life looks long to you who are so young, but even the eagle reminds us that time is fleeting.

4. The *soaring* of the eagle is used by Isaiah as a beautiful description of the progress of the Christian. Do you not envy that bird, boys

and girls, as you see it rising so gracefully upward? Well, this prophet tells us that you can imitate it, and soar through far grander regions. "They that wait on the Lord shall mount up with wings as eagles," he says; and he is right. You know some old man who has been true to Christ all his life. Does he not make you feel that he lives in a world far finer and holier than this? Yes, he does. He has mounted up as the prophet has described, and has breathed the air of heaven, and heard its music. Think of St John in Patmos, where he must have worked as a slave. His feet are cut, his body scarred, but his soul has soared upward. As he plies his spade he sees not the cruel taskmaster; on his inner vision another sight has dawned: "Lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." On the outer ear falls the coarse words of the taskmaster, and perhaps the swish of the whip; but it is drowned in the sounds to which the spirit is listening: "I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and they sang as it were a new song before the throne." Thus it was that St John mounted up with wings as an eagle; and so may we, however hard our lot, if we have the same faith and love.

III

THE QUAIL

THE next four chapters, by way of variety, are going to be put into story form. We are to be introduced into the family circle of the birds, just as if we were one of them ; and thus be silent listeners of what they have to say to each other.

“Wet-my-feet,” was the name of a fat, important looking quail. You see that is the nick-name that people in certain parts of England give to this bird. He was a handsome fellow. His head was dark brown, and the streaks of lighter shade on his wings and back gave him a kind of straw-coloured appearance. Round his throat were two dark rings of which he was just as proud as a young officer is of his star. It showed that he was grown up. By his strut you could see that he was a quail of considerable standing. In fact, he was no less than a general. Quails travel in armies of hundreds of thousands, and therefore they have to have captains, and colonels, and staff officers.

"Wet-my feet" said to one of his four wives. "We have a council of war to-night so I must go away to it."

Then he stretched out his wings, and, though he was a very fat bird, rose quickly, and flew away to a low-lying plain. It was in the south of Arabia and in the month of March.

When the leaders met what a talk they had.

"It is about time we were starting for Europe," said one.

"How is the wind?" asked "Wet-my-feet."

"It has been blowing from the south for nearly a week now, and I think that it will remain steady," was the reply.

"Then give orders that all the quails meet here three nights from now," was the command. "We must not lose the chance of a fair breeze."

Three days afterwards if you had been walking in Arabia in the daytime you would have seen nothing to have made you think that any great movement was in hand. Not a single quail would be in sight. But as soon as the sun set what a bustle there was in the air. From far and near they gathered

in their thousands, until the very stars were shut out from sight by the flutter of their wings.

“Wet-my-feet” had a busy time of it, for he had to appoint flankers, and scouts and sentinels. Then he ordered the female birds to go into a great group by themselves. “You will follow us two days later,” he said to them, for the men and women quails never travel together.

Then when all was ready he gave the order, and up in whirling circles rose the great body of birds. They had a long journey before them, for they had to fly until day-break; but it was made easy for them because of the wind behind. All they had to do was to stretch out their wings and they were blown along like a cloud.

Now we get our first lesson. You see this old quail general had discovered something which it takes a long time for boys and girls and even men and women to learn, the value of a fair wind. If people wish to reach Heaven they must get into the line of the trade winds. In the church and the Sabbath-School you will find the spiritual influences which will carry you nearer to God. Do not be like those who take no advantage of these divinely appointed helps,

but imitate the quail and catch every fair breeze that blows.

The Fate of the Stragglers

"I do not see what the use is of going in the dark," said one young quail to another, "Let us dodge our captain, and wait behind for the daylight."

"All right," was the response from his comrade, "it is only an old-fashioned superstition that our grandfathers had. You are sure to strike your head in the dark, besides it is very much better to see the country you are passing over."

So the two quails played truant, and in the big army they were not missed. Next morning they started by themselves. It was a lovely day, and as they flew after the army they felt so proud of themselves, because they knew so much better than their officers.

"When we get to be generals," said the one merrily to the other, "We will put an end to this foolish night flying. Just think what all the others have lost!"

But they never even became captains, and I will tell you why. They soon found that the wind was not so strong in the daytime and that flying was harder.

"What is that lying on the ground there?" suddenly one said in alarm to the other.

"Why, I do believe it is the bones of one of our party, and picked quite bare too. What could have caused that?"

"Some enemy surely. It must have got away from the others. A savage hawk has done this," he answered in an awed whisper.

After that they flew in silence and very hard, and wondered when they would make up on the main body. It felt very lonely now to be a pair of stragglers, and the sun was really too bright for their taste, it made them so conspicuous.

As they went on they passed many more skeletons. There were quails who had grown tired and had lagged behind, and been caught by the ravenous hawks and other birds which followed in the rear.

"Look, these must be some of our tribe," said one of the two, as he looked towards some specks on the horizon.

"No, these are not quails," replied the other with a sudden dread, "for quails you know would never fly in the daylight, except foolish ones. See they are coming this way—I believe—I believe—they are—hawks."

Yes, it was a part of the enemies' force. The

hawks with their keen eyes had detected the two stragglers long before they themselves were discerned, and were having a race to see who would reach their prey first.

“Oh, I wish we had obeyed our general, and gone with the others at night,” sighed the poor frightened quail. But it was too late now to repent. There was no hiding-place in sight, and besides it was so light that they would have been seen almost anywhere. Next minute the hawks had swooped on them, and there was another pair of skeletons left on the ground as a warning to all stragglers.

What a lot of stragglers there are in Christ's army! Foolish people who think that it does not matter whether they keep pace with the others, who imagine that they can do just as they please, and go their own way, and yet receive the same welcome at the end. Christ has taught His followers to keep together; for He knows how fierce are the foes that hover round His Church to waylay all stragglers. He gave us His Sacraments to be bonds of union, and to neglect such protection is to run the risk of these senseless quails.

Snared

"We have many dangers to encounter," said General "Wet-my-feet," as he led his column onwards, "If the wind suddenly ceases we may be cast on a barren land or amongst enemies. By the way, we are just passing over the Wilderness of Sin, where about three thousand years ago, during the spring emigration, we were blown into the camp of the Israelites, and eaten in hundreds by those wandering people. In a few days we will be in Turkey, and then we must look out, for the Pashas and their friends think it great sport to shoot us, just as they do grouse in Scotland."

The worst danger of all befell them, however, in Italy. They were flying along one night, when suddenly they heard the call of female birds and they rushed blindly forward in order to welcome their wives. But it was all a ruse on the part of the Italians, who had captured a few female quails, and putting out their eyes, had let them fly about in an enclosed place uttering their call. The male birds in their eagerness did not see the great nets spread to catch them, and striking against these they fell in thousands into the snare, and so were taken captive.

That is how Satan traps souls. He uses often a decoy. Some one whom the world would call a good fellow, perhaps, but who is spiritually blind, and by his gay manner he leads unconsciously his companions into sin, until they too are fallen into the snare. The sermon of the quail is certainly one of warning.

IV

THE CUCKOO

CHAPTER I

THE SUBTLETY OF SIN

THE cuckoo father and mother were looking with great pride at the little grey-white egg with blotches of brown upon it, which lay on the ground. They knew that one day the shell would break and out of it would come their child and heir. Only, as they did not have even a nest to bequeath, the prospects did not look bright.

“ Whatever shall we do with it ? ” asked the mother.

“ You watch it there while I go and look for a nest and a nurse,” responded the father.

Off he flew, and searched amongst the bushes until he espied a hedge-sparrow sitting in a cosy nest.

“ The very place for our baby ! ” muttered the selfish cuckoo. “ She looks a motherly old

bird, and I think her husband there is a fellow who will work hard. We could not do better than foist on them the care of our offspring. I mean to enjoy life, and have no desire to work for my children ; and my wife is of the same mind, she is too fond of excitement and gaiety to nurse her family. We will make these sparrows labour for us."

He waited and watched for a few minutes until the sparrow hen rose and left her eggs to get some food. Then he hurried back to Mistress Cuckoo.

"Make haste and follow me !" he cried.

The mother picking up the egg in her mouth obeyed, and under his guidance went straight to the nest which he had discovered. There lay half a dozen pale blue eggs quite warm. Quickly the cuckoo placed her's amongst them, and chuckled to herself as she flew away ; for really, unless a person looked closely, it would be difficult to distinguish the new one. When the hedge-sparrow returned she resumed her sitting without a single suspicion of what had taken place.

Fourteen days after that there was great excitement in that home : a little one had come out of its egg, and the father and mother sparrow made a great fuss. They did not know that it

was a cuckoo that had been hatched. The father flew away and brought back a fat, green caterpillar that ought to have served even a grown-up bird for a whole breakfast. Would you believe it, the greedy little baby cuckoo swallowed it right off, and sent the father away for more ! He had a busy time of it that day, for that clamorous cuckoo did nothing but eat.

Its real papa met the male sparrow hard at work, and said, with a laugh, " You ought to be glad that you have only got one such child."

Of course there were others soon, for the remaining eggs began to hatch, but they produced well-behaved baby sparrows. Poor little things, however, though they opened their mouths ever so wide, they never got a chance of food ; the selfish cuckoo was quicker and stronger, and gobbled up every worm the father brought.

At last, one day, the unsuspecting mother left the nest. It was an evil moment, for as soon as she was out of sight baby cuckoo turned round on his small brothers and sisters and said angrily—

" What are you doing here ? Don't you see that you are in my way ? " So without more ado he wriggled his wing under one, and lifting it to the edge of the cosy nest, flung it over.

Down, down it fell, to die a lingering death on the earth below.

“You are next,” he said to a poor trembling birdie, and though it struggled it was no use. Over it also went. Master Cuckoo now warmed to his deadly work. He knew that he had only a few minutes, but he made use of them. When he had cleared all the live chicks out of the nest, he turned his attention to the eggs. They too were in his way. Lifting them one by one, he pitched them all over the edge, and they broke with a crack on the ground. Then having the whole place to himself he felt satisfied, and when the mother sparrow returned, tried to look *innocent*.

Of course, being the only one left, he was made a great pet of by his parents, and got all the good things for himself, and so grew big and fat.

That is just the way with sin. It comes into the nest of the soul in the form of an idle thought. It would be well at the end of the day to go over our thoughts and see if there are any bad ones amongst the number. Had the hedge-sparrow done that, the cuckoo’s egg would have been discovered in time. If the evil fancy is left undisturbed it will not rest content until it begins to throw out all the good and noble

thoughts and takes possession of the heart for itself ; for sin is just as subtle and greedy as the cuckoo.

CHAPTER II

THE PENALTY OF DECEPTION

WHEN Master Cuckoo was able to fly he said good-bye to his foster-parents and went away without a word of thanks, ungrateful bird ! He thought at first that the world was a very pleasant place to live in and that he could just do as he pleased. But one day he got a fright ; a big, ugly hawk made a swoop for him, and he managed just by a squeak to escape its murderous talons. When he examined his beak he found that it was short and of little value as a weapon with which to fight against stronger birds. What was he to do ? He determined to imitate the hawk, and bluster about like a big bully.

So he began to copy its flight and actions. He spread out his tail when flying in the open, and made great swoops as if he were darting after small birds, the wily deceiver ! So expert an actor did he become that he could even join

a flock of hawks and they would never suspect that he was only a cuckoo.

Of course he had to pay for this. He had to wear an old dirty coat so that he might pass in the crowd without being noticed, and then he had to sacrifice the friendship of all the other birds. They flew in terror from him if they were alone and he approached. Or if there was a great flock of them, they would muster courage to chase him, and as he could not fight he had to run away. So, poor bird, after all he had a very lonely time of it. Though he pretended to be a hawk, he trembled in their company lest the deception would be found out, and though he would have liked to have been on speaking terms with the sparrows, they naturally would have nothing to do with him. That is the way always with deception. It isolates, it leaves a man alone in the world. There is no one so solitary as the sinner. He may put on a bold face and bluster about, and try and frighten simple-minded good people; but in his heart of hearts he is ill at ease, and there is no greater coward if the righteous would only pluck up a little courage and chase him out of the way.

CHAPTER III

THE LOVE OF PLEASURE

ONE day in August the father cuckoo said to his son, "Your mother and uncles and aunts and all the grown-ups are going to leave to-morrow night for Africa, if there is a fair wind. You youngsters can remain in Britain for another month, as perhaps the Equator would still be too hot for you. England and Scotland are all very nice in the summer, but I pity the poor creatures who have to live there all the year round. No dull skies and chilling winds for us."

So the next night, under a clear sky, with the breeze blowing softly from the north-west, all the elder birds gathered together, and after a few farewells winged their way southward.

For a few weeks Master Cuckoo and his comrades stayed on, but they never sang any more, only grumbled.

"This is a rotten place to live in," he said. "I believe there was frost last night."

That was sufficient. A week later there was not a cuckoo in the land. Their wings might have been seen far south skimming over sunny seas.

"A good riddance," said the robin, as he

hopped about on the snow-covered fields ;
“ they were only a set of thieves after all.”

So you see the Bible was right when it gave them a bad character. The pleasure-seeker makes few real friends.

V

THE HERON

HE was nick-named "Father Longlegs" by the other birds of the marsh and the river. That was, of course, behind his back, for his long, sharp beak made them respect him to his face. If they thought that he did not know, they were mistaken; for there was nothing in the whole country-side that missed his glance. A twig misplaced, the trail of a frog on the slime caught his eye at once.

At that moment he was wading in the shallows followed by his family of three, which is a large one from the herons' point of view.

"Now, I wish to make you all 'Boy Scouts,'" he said as he looked round proudly on his sons, who were awkwardly following their father.

"You must not splish splash like that with your feet or you will frighten all the fish, but walk as I do. See!" Lifting his feet high he set them down so quietly into the water that there was scarcely a ripple.

He had gone only a few yards, when suddenly

he stopped, with one leg half suspended, and stood motionless like a statue.

"Whist!" he whispered almost under his breath. "Quick!" he added, and then, like lightning, his beak struck a blow at something in the water, and next instant he held a wriggling fish in his mouth.

His children tried to imitate him. Up went one leg under each little wing, and three little heads were thrown back on the shoulders, ready to strike out at the fish as they darted past. But this part of the drill was not so easy; for when they made a dab with their long beaks they lost their balance, and the three baby birds fell flapping into the water.

"After that there is not much use fishing any more here," said the father, and, raising himself on his wings, he led the way to another marsh.

"Quick, down!" he cried, as he was flying over the moor, "there is a man shooting wild duck, and though we are too fishy for food, we are sometimes killed for the sake of our plumes. Look, down there is the best cover."

With a swoop he made for some bushes which were just the colour of his own coat. "Now stand here, and don't move, and we are safe enough."

His three sons obeyed. But when the gun went, "Bang, bang," and every living thing on wings in that marsh rose with a frightened whirl into the air, it was very difficult to remain motionless. Yet they had such confidence in their father that the three youngsters stood silently without moving a muscle. Their hearts beat very quickly when the sportsman passed only a few yards from them, but they were so like their surroundings that he never noticed them, and so they escaped.

Off they started again, but had not gone far when their father whispered "Halt!" He had seen some yards ahead a frog jumping. Very cautiously he moved a few steps forward, and then stood motionless, as if he were just some old root sticking in the ground. Once or twice the frog turned round its big eyes as if suspicious of danger, but as there was not even the rustle of a leaf, it went on with its own hunt for dinner. Nearer and nearer the heron crept up, and then it drew back its neck. For a second it waited to make sure of its aim. The frog gave an innocent hop, and next instant the cruel beak descended like a flash, the frog was seized, and then the heron beat out its brains against a stone, and handed it as a tasty morsel to his young.

A little farther on they came to a lake. Here the father waded in and took his stand like a post. His head sank back on his shoulders, and you would have thought that he had gone asleep, but he was watching every movement in the water around him. There were plenty of fish, but for a long time they kept their distance. An hour passed, and they grew accustomed to this new motionless object, and soon began to swim around it. It was hard for the heron to pretend that he did not see; but he was not going to waste his chance on a small fish, he wanted a fat one. At last, a big fellow followed his comrades within the fatal range. The long neck shot down. There was a splash, and the heron had secured his next course.

It took a good many days' training before the young herons learned to be good scouts. But when their father cut off supplies and they found out that when they made mistakes they had to go hungry, they soon became as patient and watchful as their parent.

Learn to be spiritual scouts, to detect both the evil and the good. God wants us all to be fishers—of men. But if we are to be successful we must borrow some hints from the heron. We are not meant to scare people away from the church by long faces, but by the gentleness,

the love, the sunshine of the child to draw them to the Sanctuary. People like to go into beautiful gardens, and children are God's flowers with which He would like to deck His church, and so make it attractive to all.

How to carry the biggest Load

Father Longlegs was out for a day's fishing by himself. This was before his children were grown up, when they were just ugly ducklings in the nest, all head and mouth. To support even three of a family meant a hard day's work. So there were no moments to waste. To fly backwards and forwards to the nest with every catch would mean to lose the precious minutes. So like an experienced fisher he provided himself with a basket. This was a hole in the ground or amongst the undergrowth where he hid all he caught.

At last he felt it was time to go home. As he brought out all the victims he had bagged that day you would have thought him a true sportsman. Frogs, fish, eels, and some small birds he laid out on the ground before him. Too big a bag for him to carry, you would say. But he was equal to the task. He arranged all the dead creatures in a circle, with their heads out and a leg or tail crossed in the centre.

Taking a good grip of these ends he thus managed to lift the whole lot, and flew away with all the animals dangling from his beak.

The next time you are tempted to say, "I can't do it," think of the heron, and then get a hold of all your tasks by the right end, and there is no fear but that you will succeed.

Where to Hit

When Father Longlegs got home that night he found that there was great excitement in the nest. Usually there were three baby heads all looking up to him with mouths wide open, as if each were saying, "Me first, please." But now all the heads were peeping anxiously over the side. There, stealthily climbing up the trunk, was a wild cat. Dropping his mouthful of game into the nest the father prepared to give battle. The battlefield was the branch of a tree, and to look at the combatants one would say that the heron had little chance. The cat's eyes blazed as it prepared to spring at the throat of the bird. For a moment they faced each other. It was a case of claws and teeth against beak. It is not always the weapon that counts, but the skill with which it is used, and the heron knew when and how to strike. With unerring

aim the cat sprang, but the bird quickly lifted its wing as a shield and caught its assailant on the edge. For a second the cat hung there, its claws dug deep into the feathers, and while it hesitated as to its next move the heron curved its neck back and quick as a shot gave two fierce digs, driving into each eye in close succession its six-inch bill. With a savage cry of pain the cat tumbled to the ground, and then crawled off blind into the woods.

The heron was the weaker of the two, but it knew where to hit. We need the same art when attacked by sin, and must hit for the centre; half measures are of little use. Christ knew this when He laid His finger on the young ruler's besetting sin, and said, "Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

How to Escape

Father Longlegs had his sorrows. One day he was out with his youngest son, when suddenly he noticed a small black speck far away. "Rise, rise," he shouted. But his son did not obey at once, for he saw nothing of which to be afraid. But those black wings were nearing at the rate of over one mile a minute. Then too late did

the young heron give a scream and shoot up into the air, for he now had recognised the deadly falcon. The father knew that if his son could only get up high enough then he would be safe ; but there was not time. With a terrible swoop the falcon pounced upon the rising bird and bore it down to the ground, where it was killed.

Sin makes these fearful attacks upon the soul ; but it can only succeed if we are under it. If through faith we rise heavenward, and close to Christ, then it cannot reach us. If you would keep safe in the hour of temptation, then make the prayer of that beautiful hymn your own, "Nearer my God to Thee."

VI

THE OSTRICH

CHAPTER I

LOST BEARINGS

How Ratie, the little baby ostrich, ever got out of his shell is a puzzle. But perhaps you would like first to hear how he received such a funny name. His parents did not give it to him, because they were not there when he was born. The next time you have a fowl for dinner ask your father to hand you the breast-bone, not to break it in order to see who is to be married first, but to examine it. Hold it up, and you will discover that it looks very much like the ribs of a boat with a big keel at the bottom. Now, if you had been eating an ostrich instead of a chicken you would have noticed that the breast-bone was shaped differently. It has no keel, but is like a flat-bottomed boat, and the Latin word for that is "ratis." So you see how our baby ostrich got its name.

But why was it left to come into the world

all alone? Well, you will scarcely believe me when I tell you that its parents had gone out for a run and had forgotten the way home. Just think of your father and your mother when they go out for their Saturday walk not remembering in which street they lived, and forgetting all about you! Perhaps it might be a good thing for you if they tried it some time. It certainly made a little man of Ratie before he grew up, for he had to find his very first breakfast for himself, and that in a desert too. If it was hard lines on him it was certainly worse for the other unhatched chicks. There was a dozen or so of them lying in and out of the nest, for I fear the grown-up ostriches are poor housekeepers, and they had just made a little hollow in the sand which they called "home." So you cannot blame Ratie too much if he thought that he would like an egg for breakfast, seeing that there was nothing else in sight. So he started on one that was within reach, the little cannibal!

But perhaps you are still wondering how he was hatched at all, seeing that his parents were away. His father and mother had taken turns of sitting on the nest, the father at night, and the mother during the day. All went well until they heard the growl of a wild animal in

the dark, then both birds rose and ran as only ostriches can without a thought of how they were to return, and so they lost their way ; and Ratie would never have been hatched had it not been for the scorching heat of the sun.

Silly birds ! you say, because they cannot find their own home. There are thousands of human beings a great deal more silly than that, who are aimlessly running away from their only real home, the Church of God. We might even pardon the ostriches for they have no maps or guide-books, whereas men and women have an open Bible, and in their inmost hearts they know that its words are true ; yet they go on racing about everywhere except to the one spot where they might find peace. Like the ostriches how little frightens them from the Sanctuary ! A minister's ears grow accustomed to the wearisome complaint, " I am sorry that I cannot go to church just now because — because — " The excuses are legion. After a day's visitation a minister no longer feels amazed at the ostrich being so easily scared from its nest !

CHAPTER II

LEARNING NAVIGATION

"What a ridiculous pair of wings to give a big chap like me," growled Ratie, as drawing himself up to his full height he gave two or three flaps. "I may work them as hard as I like, but I cannot lift my feet off the ground. Why, a man with his aeroplane can beat me at flying, and I am a *bird*, and he is only an unwinged human being. It makes one ashamed of one's species. Let me have another try."

He stretched out his wings again and flapped them with all his might, but it was no use he could not fly.

"I would fling them away if I could," he said in anger.

At that moment another ostrich came running up.

"Look out, Ratie!" he cried. "There are a lot of huntsmen after us. We must fly for our lives Up with your wings!"

Ratie looked, and there, away on the horizon, he saw a great cloud of dust.

"It is no use," he responded gloomily. "I have just been trying mine. They are only in the way, that's all."

"Oh, I forgot that you were an orphan and had nobody to teach you," laughed the other. "Everything is of use in this world, even an ostrich's wings, only you have got to know what to do with them. Watch me, and follow my example. Hoist your right wing and catch that breeze."

Ratie looked in amazement at his friend, for he was skimming over the desert at the rate of twenty-six miles an hour. Then he did what he was told and raised one wing to the wind, and balanced himself with the other. In an instant he was caught by a gust and carried over the sand at a great speed. How his legs, which worked like lightning, managed to keep pace he did not know.

"This is glorious," he exclaimed. "Wings are some good after all when you know how to use them," he added as he trimmed his to catch the gale.

God has given us the wings of faith, not to lift us above the earth and carry us to Heaven right away, but to help us along in our present race. Some people laugh at faith like foolish Ratie, but the man who knows how to use it soon finds that like a wing it catches the Spirit of God and speeds him on his way.

CHAPTER III

PRIDE GOES BEFORE A FALL

Ratie was admiring himself in his mirror. Of course he had no looking-glass only the sand on which the sunshine cast his shadow ; but he strutted about, and craned his neck to see all his twists and turns reproduced on the ground, as if he were in love with his shadow. Then he stretched out his wings haughtily, and said to himself.

“ Just look at my gorgeous feathers, the Prince of Wales is proud to wear them.”

At that moment something gripped him round the neck ; it was a lasso. Before he could move, another and another rope were quickly passed round him and he was a captive.

Then men came and plucked out his beautiful feathers. It was not really painful, because they would have come out in any case when he began to moult. Still, when it was over what a dejected-looking creature he appeared, all his pretty colours were gone. They would adorn many a hat far across the seas ; but I hope that the owner would never be as proud of her feather

as Ratie was when he wore it first, for pride always goes before a fall. Christ gives us the other side of that great truth when He says : "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

VII

THE DOVE

Do you keep pigeons? If not, you have most likely a friend who does, and can therefore tell me a great deal about them. Now, if you were to write an essay on the dove, what would you say about it? I think I can guess. You would speak of its nice clean feathers, and when you tried to describe its eyes I am sure you would use the word trustful, while you would call its voice soft and pleading. The cooing of the dove has almost become a proverb. Then would you not say something about its flight? You have all read about carrier pigeons—how they will fly hundreds of miles straight homewards. There are small boys who, if they wandered through even a few streets, would soon get lost. Think how clever that little bird must be, then, at finding its way. Perhaps you would next describe its character as gentle and harmless; and the essay would not be complete unless you spoke of its cot, and told how it was in a sheltered place, high up out of reach of danger.

Now, what I want to say is this: the Bible has told us all that long ago, and to each of these truths it has attached a special lesson, and that is what I want you to learn. So we will take them one by one. The first three give us a picture of the Christian Church. If you turn up the Song of Solomon, at the sixth chapter and ninth verse, you will see that the Church is spoken of as "My Dove." Do you wonder that God should use this bird as a symbol of it? Let us try and discover from His Word some of His reasons for doing this.

1. The first reason is, I think, just the one that we mentioned at the beginning—the purity of this bird. It is termed undefiled in Scripture. That is what the Church should be. Like the beauty of a spotless dove, its stainless character ought to attract. It is the sins of each member that spoil this likeness. Will you not try, then, to keep your heart free from evil, that the Church to which you belong may become more like the dove?

2. The second reason is to be found in the dove's eyes. We said they were trustful. In that same book to which we have just referred, Christ says of His Church, "Thou hast doves' eyes." Have you ever noticed what different kinds people have? Often you can tell whether

a boy is good or bad by looking straight into his eyes. When they glare, or flash as if a flame of fire burned within them, then you know the heart is hot with anger. Whey they look sly or stealthy, that is a sign of deceit. But when they are open and frank and honest, you see right through them to the very depths of the soul. Now, the Church should be always looking up to Christ in faith and love. When on the Sabbath the minister offers public prayer, the congregation is lifting its vision to God; but if there is any member thinking of something sinful at that moment, then the spiritual eye is not quite open. You must do your very best, then, by praying in your own heart, to make your Church turn to Jesus with the trustful, honest eye of the dove.

3. The Bible also takes note of its voice as plaintive and pleading, The secret of its charm is what we might call the wooing note in it. Now, that is what God loves to hear in the prayers of His people. Some boys and girls, I fear, say over their prayers at night just as they would a lesson, and in the Church even men and women think often more of the form than the meaning of the petitions offered. Roman Catholics count them with the aid of beads, as if God was pleased by their mere

number. No ; what He wants is the voice of the dove in them—soft, sweet, winning.

4. The next three truths about the dove describe more clearly the child of God. Let me speak now of its power of flight. When it stretches out its white wings, how swiftly and far it can fly ! Men, in cities surrounded by cruel enemies, have taken a pigeon and tied to its legs a little paper, telling of their distress and begging for help ; and away it has flown, far above the red battlefields and beyond the range of bullets, until it reached its home and friendly hands and delivered its message. You remember what David cried when the storm of sin and sorrow broke over him : “ Oh, that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.”

You have watched the dark thunder-clouds piling up their black masses in the sky, and against their gloom have seen the white wings of some bird as it hurries for shelter before the tempest bursts. That is a picture of the Christian. God's wrath is a terrible thing, and already it is gathering. How can we escape ? If we ask Christ, He will give us the wings of faith with which we may fly to Him, and, sheltered in His breast, we shall be safe.

5. There is another thing about the dove that

Christ took notice of—its gentleness. He said to His disciples, “Be ye harmless as doves.” When the Holy Spirit took an earthly form, what was it? Why, just that of the dove. So God teaches us that if we are to be His children we must imitate the dove in this, and not quarrel and fight with one another, but be kind and loving and makers of peace.

6. Our last thought connected with the dove is its love of home. Where does it make it? Out of the reach of danger. The wild doves of which the Bible speaks had their nests in the cleft of the rock. Now, Christ is the “Rock of Ages.” It is only in Him that we are quite safe. Our parents may protect us from a number of evils, but they cannot defend us from sin—the worst of all. It is only Jesus who can do that. Therefore see that you make the home of your soul with Him. Some people go to Him only when they are driven by sorrow or loss, and then forsake Him and forget His kindness when they are prosperous. But be like the dove: love your home, and then you will not do as the restless raven did—wander away and never return—but will abide in the presence of God for ever and ever.

VIII

THE SPARROW

THIS bird is a well-known friend, perhaps too familiar, especially when the fruit is ripe. You may have thought it far too common to take much notice of, but God who made it loves its little ways ; its notes of joy or sorrow may not be music to us, but they are to Him. Its habits, its perils, and pleasures teach us many lessons and warnings that are useful for our own lives. The Bible makes the sparrow preach us a sermon with four heads.

1. *Its shelter*.—When Samuel Rutherford was in banishment, he wrote these words to Lady Kenmure : “ I am for the present thinking the sparrows and swallows that build their nests in Anwoth blessed birds.” The Psalmist said the same thing in different words. He also was in exile—the exile of sin. He was thinking of the peace of God’s house, of the security of the little birds that nestled under its roof, when he sang, “ Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts.”

Look at that long line of pilgrims crossing the plains. Amongst the horses and camels there are little children. They are Jews going up to worship at Jerusalem. How eager they are to see again the beloved temple; but the road is dusty and tiresome, and so they sing the beautiful words of the 84th Psalm, which speaks, you remember, of "the sparrow finding an house" under the roof of the temple.

Though the little boys and girls might not understand all that their parents were singing in that Psalm, yet when they reached the big city, and were led up the streets to the temple and gazed on its beautiful walls and dome, there, away up round its roof, they would see the little sparrows fluttering, and they would remember that verse about them.

Now, the next time you feel bad or naughty, just look out of the window, and perhaps you will see a little sparrow perched on the branch of a tree. Do you know what it is saying with its chirps? "Psalm eighty-four and three, Psalm eighty-four and three;" and that means this: "You have run away from God, you bad little boy; but He is very near to me, for I am in His keeping. Do you not envy me? Then come back to Him, and He will forgive and

protect you." That is the first sermon the sparrow preaches.

2. *Its solitude.*—This lesson is a sad one. Turn up Psalm cii., verse 7, and you read, "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop." When the poor birdie has lost its mate, it is often seen perched all alone on some branch or roof wailing its little heart out. That is the picture the Bible gives us of loneliness. Does it not almost bring tears to your eyes? It is very hard to be alone in the world. I wonder if those of you who have happy homes, and loving fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, thank God enough for giving you so many dear ones. I have just returned from a visit to the west of Canada, where I met with a great many settlers from this country. Most of them had nice houses, and seemed very comfortable; but I could tell from their very hand-grip that there was something lacking; they were lonely; they were thinking of all the friends they had left in Scotland.

There is a worse loneliness than that—the loneliness of sin. The boy who has told a lie or done something wrong is far more lonely. His sin shuts him out from even those around him, and, saddest of all, from God.

3. *Its sacrifice.*—The sparrow tells us how

this sin is to be removed. When you have got a black stain on your clothes, you run to your mother to see if she can wash it out. But what about the stain of evil on your soul? She cannot remove that; only God can. How does He do it? Well, long ago He gave the Israelites a picture lesson of how it was done, and He used the sparrow as an illustration. Read the opening verses of the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus, and you will learn all about it. Only remember that the word "bird" used there is really a sparrow. There was no disease so bad as that of the leper; it reminds us of the terrible effects of sin. How, then, according to the old law, was it to be cleansed? The priest had to take two sparrows, and kill one, and dip the other in its blood and let it escape. Thus in a dim way was pictured the Cross of Christ. He, like the innocent sparrow, had to be put to death, and it is through the sprinkling of His blood that we are saved from sin. All those years the sparrows were silently preaching a gospel sermon to the people; this should surely make us think kindly of them.

4. *Its security*.—The life of the sparrow seems a very perilous one. There are hawks in the air with greedy eyes ready to destroy it; while creeping along the grass or climbing the tree

itself is the stealthy cat. It makes its nest in the rich clusters of ivy, and the gardener comes along, and with his cruel shears cuts ruthlessly down both home and shelter. Yet what does Christ say? "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Once an officer and his little daughter were sailing to India, when a fierce storm arose, and the ship pitched and tumbled in the waves. The little girl grew very frightened and began to cry. Turning round towards her, the father suddenly drew his sword from its sheath and made a lunge at her; but she only smiled up through her tears. She was not afraid of him.

"Did I not give you a fright?" he asked.

"Oh, no, father," was her answer. "I knew you would not hurt me."

"Then, my little girl, just trust your heavenly Father more," he replied. And that taught her to look out on the raging sea with a new peace and faith.

Every time you watch a sparrow and see how happy it is, despite all its dangers, I want you to remember that the same arm that protects it will shield you. Listen to that sparrow now,

and hear what it says : “ I am a poor little bird, only worth half a farthing, and you are of more value than all the gold in the earth ; yet God watches over me. Why then should you ever cry or be distressed ? He loves you so much that He died for you on the Cross. Only trust Him, and then you will never be really frightened any more.”

The sparrows you see have been sent by God to teach us a number of truths that are of great value. Let them be your schoolmasters, and try to prove yourself an apt scholar.

IX

THE STORK

“WHAT a graceful bird !” you say, as you look at the stork. How soft and white are its beautiful feathers ! You would like to stroke them. Only on the tips of the wings is there a fringe of black, all the rest of the plumage is like the snow. Surely such a bird must be the emblem of purity. What does the Bible say about it ? When we open its pages we get a surprise, for it tells us that it is unclean.

1. *The shunned stork* is our first lesson ; and it reminds us of our own proverb that it is not all gold that glitters. Though it looks so spotless and innocent, yet that is not its real character. The Israelites were forbidden to taste its flesh, or even to touch its dead body. Just look at the list of the other creatures with which it is ranked, and if a bird, like a boy, is known by its companions, I think you will agree that they do not do the stork much credit. The vulture, the owl, the bat, the hawk, the weasel, and others like these make up the class amongst which we find this poor bird.

“How has it come so low down as that?” you ask. The answer is, because of what it feeds on. After I tell you what it likes for dinner I feel certain that even you will look upon it with some disgust, despite its showy dress. You would not care to touch a serpent, would you? But to see a stork actually eat the wriggling thing, why, it sends a shiver right through you! Then it is fond of frogs. You might see it standing for hours on the side of a marsh waiting to pick up one of those nimble little creatures. Down goes the long beak suddenly with a savage dab, patience gets its reward, the frog is caught, crushed, swallowed. Now your admiration for the stork will be turning into contempt, and you will say its bright coat is just a deception and a lie.

We have a lot of human storks like that, men and women, boys and girls, who seem very nice to look at, but who have depraved tastes, and who should be labelled like this bird, “unclean.” You see, it is the habits, and not the white feathers, that the Bible takes into account. People may admire your face, you may have a nice suit or a pretty dress, but the most important thing is the kind of food that you are giving your mind and soul.

“What a fine-looking little girl!” someone

says. Yes, but see her just now standing in that group of companions. She is listening very eagerly to a false story that is being told her about a friend. She pretends to be very much shocked, but all the same she is pleased to hear this evil report. When the mind is fed on falsehood the whole nature becomes corrupted; a craving is started that always demands a fresh slander, and the girl develops into what is termed a gossip. There is only one class then that she is fit for, and that is the class in which the Bible places the stork; however beautiful she may appear, her mind is not clean. She is a danger to everyone who meets her, for the evil is in her like a disease that spreads its infection even to others.

Or think of some boy you have met. He may look manly and honest, but his great delight is always to be mocking and laughing at others. He feeds his mind not with the good he sees in his neighbours, but with the evil; until at last it also becomes unclean. He loses the power to discern what is noble and true in other people. From always thinking of what is bad his own heart becomes polluted, and soon his words, and even his face, betray the stain of his mind.

If we want to be really beautiful, we must pay attention not merely to our clothes and our

bodies, but also fill our minds with pure and holy thoughts. It is in the Bible that we will find these ; and if you will only take the trouble to learn its truths there will be no fear of you becoming like the stork—a living lie ; but you will acquire that real inward beauty that will outlast all outward pretence.

2. *The staunch stork* is the next picture that the Bible gives us of this bird, and I am sure that we are glad to find that it can be used as an example as well as a warning. The passage is in Job xxxix. 13, and the lesson taught is more by suggestion than by words. There it is the ostrich that is being described, and the writer asks, “Are they the feathers of a stork ?” He is comparing the two birds, the faithlessness of the one with the staunchness of the other. The ostrich leaves its eggs and its young without a thought ; they may be trampled on and crushed for all it seems to care. On the other hand, the stork has one great virtue, that of devotion to its mate and to its offspring. Strassburg, in Germany, is called “The City of Storks.” From its earliest days they have lived and built their nests there, until the people look upon them now as friends. An exciting story is told about one of these birds in Delft. One day a factory caught fire, high up in one

of the chimneys a stork had built its nest. Its young were too small to fly. What was the mother bird to do? The smoke became denser and the flames leaped higher. The crowd below could see the white wings of the parent as it swirled round and round through the wreathes of smoke. At last the fire reached the nest; for a moment the mother was seen hovering on the outskirts of the blaze, with feathers scorched and blackened now, then poising itself it swooped down right into the burning nest and perished with its young. "Bravo, Stork!" is what we feel inclined to shout.

If a bird will thus give its very life for those it loves, might we not expect the same staunchness in every boy and girl towards those who love them, and especially to Christ? Yet there are children who can be frightened from telling the truth by a mere threat; they desert Christ and tell a lie rather than suffer in the slightest. How ashamed they should be to look at a stork!

3. *The skilful stork* is our third lesson. In Psalm civ. 17 we read about it making its nest away up in the fir tree. It generally tries to secure a place for its home on some lofty tower or house, but in Palestine the roofs are flat, and so it has to seek the shelter of the trees. It is quick to spy the highest spot on which it

can build, and how clever it is to fasten to walls of wood or stone its cosy nest. We have also, boys and girls, to make for ourselves a home; and I would like you in this to imitate the stork. Build high, as high as you can. Which is the highest place you can think of? Heaven. Well, build there. "In my Father's house there are many mansions," says Jesus. Do you think He has one for you? Ask Him and make sure. Some people build only on the earth, but such houses are soon swept away. "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven."

4. *The submissive stork* is our last point. "The stork knoweth her appointed times," says Jeremiah. You do not like to get out of your warm bed in the morning. The next time you are tempted to stay ten minutes behind the hour, think of the stork. In the middle of August it turns out from its comfortable nest, and obedient to one of the Creator's laws, takes its flight far to the South. Look at that flock of birds, how swiftly they fly! See how the poor weary stragglers are flapping their wings frantically. I will tell you the reason. They say that the last stork to arrive at their destination is put to death by the others. No wonder they make haste! If that was a law in human life, how we would all hurry! There would be

no over-sleeping then! It *is* a law in the spiritual world. God's angels still lay hold of us as they did of Lot, saying, "Haste thee, escape thither." To those who would fain come to Him after the door of life is shut, Christ will say, "I know you not."

II

THE INSECT HOUSE

"The midge's wing beats to and fro
A thousand times ere one can utter 'O.'"

X

THE FLY

IF a visitor from Mars were asked, "Who are the inhabitants of the earth?" and if he judged merely by numbers, he would likely reply, "The world is inhabited by insects."

For every one man I am sure there are a million of these little creatures. Already they have been divided up into 200,000 different families; but we have only really begun to try and count them. Of insects we may truly use the Bible phrase and say, they are "as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude."

The earth is a great battlefield, where a constant struggle is going on for life between armies of living creatures, each fighting against the other. At first you might think that the poor insect had little chance. It is so small. It has not strong enough limbs with which to defend itself against the attacks of bigger animals. Perhaps not, but then it makes up for lack of muscle by cleverness of head and swiftness of wing. Even its smallness is often

its safety. How cunning some of them are! They imitate leaves or sticks, so that they escape notice, and some even sham death; while many are armed with weapons which are deadly enough. They have their sharp lances which they plunge into a man's body; and what is worse, they inject a poison which is more to be dreaded than the wound itself.

We are so accustomed to flies that perhaps we have never stopped to examine them, and at first imagine that all are alike. There they are, buzzing round the room. At a glance we see that there is a difference in size; but the small ones are not baby flies, for no insect except one like the queen of the white ants grows after it has expanded its wings. "Receiving the toga," used to be the old Roman phrase for marking the time when a lad became a man, and so the wings are a fly's "toga." The smaller ones, therefore, belong to a different family; and so in a single room we might find just as great a difference amongst the flies as there is between the races in Europe.

Now the Bible, which takes such an accurate photograph of Eastern life, does not omit the fly. In Ex. viii. 21, we read God's threat to Pharaoh, "I will send swarms of flies upon thee." Of course we can only guess the kind of insect meant,

but I am quite sure that it was not our harmless house-fly, but one that could bite. Perhaps it was a gnat.

This blood-thirsty little creature carries no less than five sharp lancets on its upper lip ; with these it pierces the skin, and then puts down something like the trunk of an elephant, through which it sucks up the blood.

1. The lesson of the two lives is the first truth these creatures teach us. They begin life in the water, swimming about like fish, before their form is changed and they become flies and take to the air. Let us follow for a moment the history of the gnat. The mother lays about three hundred eggs, which she binds together into the form of a tiny boat, and launches on the waters of some pool. This curious craft goes bobbing up and down on the top of the little waves, and is so perfectly made that it always floats on the surface. At the end of three days a little door is pushed open at the end of each egg, and out comes the gnat. Only you would never think that it was some day to become a fly. It is a wriggling little fish, half an inch long, and swims along with its head down, and just the tip of its tail, through which it breathes, above the water.

Its boyhood lasts for about a month, then

comes a day when it straightens out near the surface, and prepares for its new life. Its skin splits open all down the back, and there emerges the head of a fly, then it pulls out its long legs, pair by pair, and now arrives the critical moment. If a gust of wind were to upset the empty skin before it is quite free, its delicate wings would get wet, and it would drown in the very water in which it had been swimming a few moments before. However, it does not waste time. Like a boy who has got a new toy it wants to try at once its new gauzy wings, so it stretches them out and flies away.

Now I think God uses this insect as an object lesson. We know that we are not to live only on this earth. Here we are like the fly in its first stage, we are not yet in our natural element. But there will come a time when in the words of St Paul, "This corruptible must put on incorruption," when we must pass to a higher world; and in case men should think such a thing impossible, God has commissioned the fly to show us how natural such a change is.

2. The damage done is our second lesson. These little flies can kill people by the hundreds, and I will tell you how. When the gnat sticks its lance into some person to draw blood, it often leaves behind a tiny microbe which it has

got from the veins of some other person, who perhaps was ill with fever. This tiny creature at once begins to have a big family in its new home, and thus the person bitten by the gnat in turn takes ill, and so the fever spreads.

Now evil words, I think, are just like gnats : they leave a poison behind which breeds the fever of sin. They may seem so small as not to count, but if they suggest what is wrong or impart an untruth, these in the end may destroy the soul. I wish people would just be as angry against idle words as they are against the less harmful mosquito.

3. The work wrought by flies is our next point. God has given them duties, and we owe them much. In hot climates putrid matter would soon poison the air, but the flies, like little scavengers, get to work, and will pick bones so clean that you would think that they had been scraped and washed. That is an object lesson of what kind words also may do. They will quickly remove hatred and jealousy and selfishness, and thus purify and sweeten the moral atmosphere of the home.

4. The traps that tempt is our last lesson. Flies have their enemies. I have only time to speak of one of the strangest. This is the plant called the sundew. At one time it used to get

its food out of the soil like its commonplace neighbours ; but when it found that the ground, often hard and barren, could not supply its needs, it struck out a new line of business, and began to grow a lot of sensitive red hairs on its leaves, with a little cup at their ends filled with a sweet drink, which tempts the flies. See, there comes one buzzing round. It catches sight of the cup, and perhaps smells its contents. In another second it has dipped its head in. Then a strange thing happens : all the hairs at once bend round it and discharge a sticky fluid that gums the wings and the legs of the foolish captive to the leaf, until after many struggles it dies, and is absorbed by the plant.

What a temperance sermon the fly could preach ! For that is just how men are caught in the trap of drink. They think they will only have a sip ; but temptation closes round them, and too late they find they have become its victim. Shun, therefore, the cup that tempts, just as the wise fly ought to shun the sundew.

XI

THE CATERPILLAR

IF you wished to get a lesson in the art of self-defence, which animal would you choose as a teacher ?

“ Oh, the lion, or the tiger, or the bear,” I am sure you would say. However, I think that I can suggest a better. It is not armed like these with sharp teeth and claws, nor is it strong ; in fact, it is one of the most helpless of creatures. I mean the caterpillar. Perhaps just because it has no armour to protect it, and can be so easily crushed, its methods of defence are all the more strange. What are they ?

1. There is *defiance*. The caterpillar of the Privet Hawk-Moth has a courageous way of driving off its foes. Look what a pretty creature it is, in its coat of bright green with stripes of white shaded with purple. It at once catches your eye, and how defenceless it appears. Watch, however, that little boy trying to pick it up, and see what happens. The moment his fingers come near it its back is twisted round as if it

had a sting, it raises its head like a cobra, and sways it from side to side. The lad, you may be sure, is too frightened to touch it, and even animals are scared away ; and all the time it is perfectly harmless.

This reminds me of the text, " Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." There are certain sins which must be met by a bold front. So when you are tempted just remember how this caterpillar meets its danger, and make a brave show of resistance. The devil is a coward, and he fears all brave boys and girls, even though they are small and weak, and he will run away from you. Just try the next time, and see if this is not true.

2. Then there is *flight*. Of course you know that caterpillars are really moths and butterflies in their first form. By and by they roll themselves up and go to sleep. The pupæ of the Eyed Hawk-Moth digs a hole for itself in the soil, and lies there for many months. Then in June or July a strange thing happens. The chrysalis splits open at the back of the head, and out walks a perfect moth. The caterpillar stage is, I think, a good picture of our life on earth compared to the larger life that awaits after death. While here, like the caterpillar, we are exposed to constant dangers.

Look for a moment at the Tiger-Moth caterpillar. It is covered with a splendid coat of soft hair, as if it were an Arctic explorer! Touch it, and it acts in the very opposite way from the one I have been describing. In a second it rolls itself up into a woolly ball, and tucks its head away tight. You try to pick it up, but likely as not, it will roll right off your fingers on to the ground, and when it gets there it stretches itself out and runs away.

Now there are some sins which have to be treated in the same manner. It is not wise even to think of them; our only safety is to shut our eyes and our ears, and to run away. That was St Paul's advice to Timothy when he said, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things."

3. A third means of escape is by *imitation*. It is the "stick" caterpillar who is our best teacher in this mode of defence.

"Where are the caterpillars?" asked a little boy, as he looked into a glass case containing these creatures.

"Look again," said his father. "There are lots of them before your very eyes."

"Oh, how funny! I thought that these were only twigs," was the astonished reply.

These insects imitate the branch on which they lie so closely that they are often mistaken

for it, and so escape from their enemies. Sometimes they stand out rigid, and look like bits of broken twig. There we have a capital hint in the great art of self-defence. Grow in likeness to Christ, develop His character within you, and the more perfect that resemblance the more secure will you be from sin.

4. A fourth method is *gentleness*. Now I am going to give you a very amusing example. The caterpillar of the Vapourer Moth is covered with soft thick hairs. Not much protection in that, you will say. Wait a moment. We will put one into a cage beside its enemy the lizard. What can it do? At all events, it does not seem very frightened. The lizard sees it, and comes running forward to get a nice sweet dinner. The caterpillar actually goes to meet its enemy, and swelling itself out seems to offer a tasty bite. The soft hairs all rise on its body, and to the lizard it appears to double in size, and he thinks that he is going to have a grand feast. So he begins by taking as huge a mouthful as he can, greedy beast! But he does not attempt a second, why? Because all that he has got is a great bunch of black hairs, which stick in his throat, and he spends a most uncomfortable half-hour trying to rid himself of that tickling mouthful, and decides

in future to leave that kind of caterpillar severely alone.

This reminds me of the verse, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." Imitate this creature when you are irritated by some one who has lost his temper and you are tempted to answer back. Instead of saying sharp things, try soft words, and you will find that they will prove much more effective. That person will not again so readily get angry with you, your words will remain in his mind, and he will go away realizing what a fool he has been.

XII

THE ANT

THE ants take life very seriously, and perhaps that is why there is so much unconscious humour about their ways. One does not need to visit foreign countries to see strange customs ; we have teeming cities at our own doors, whose government and manners may be a source of constant interest to the observer, and an idle afternoon by the side of an ant-hill may prove as entertaining as a visit to Paris.

A Nurse's Duties

Let us take a peep into the nursery of the ant-home. Not in one room, but in hundreds, lie the still unconscious pupæ in their egg-cradles, beside each a nurse is patiently watching. It is no idle vigil. Her mouth is pressed close to her tiny charge, and with the warmth of her breath she nourishes the hidden germ of life. In a neighbouring cot there is the suspense of excitement. Four nurses seated on their hindlimbs, like motionless human beings, are intent

on the cocoon, which is more like a silken envelope than an egg. A feeble quivering tells their sharp eyes that the little prisoner is impatient to take his share in the world's work. Did he know the ceaseless toil that awaits, perhaps he would be more content to enjoy the shelter of his crib ! But his chance is gone, his watchful nurse has seen that tell-tale warning, and with its sharp mandibles has cut the silken threads, and chipped a hole just where the little head peeps out, for the first time on its wonderful world. All it can see are the earnest faces of its four nurses. The other three, with utmost gentleness, are pulling out its limbs, and smoothing down its wings with a loving pat.

But their task is not yet ended. The little ones must have their milk at stated times, and with a nursery of a thousand babies, the matron in charge must have her hands more than full. At dawn the ant-city becomes astir with a strange activity. From chambers deep down in the earth, where the young have been placed for the night to keep them warm, a queer procession takes place. Nurse after nurse appears, carrying a little one in her arms ; along the dark passages and winding corridors she goes, up forty or fifty flights of stairs she bears her living burden, until she reaches the highest apartments.

In these rooms, warmed now by the heat of the sun, she tenderly deposits her charge, and runs back for another, and still another. At sunset, the procession is reversed, and the little ones laid to rest in their cosy, underground cells.

Once, at midnight, a gentleman tried the effect of artificial light by holding a candle above the ant-home. In a moment the news was passed from sentry to sentry, that the chambers at the top were lighted and heated. At once the nurses began to carry their babies up, and when he changed the light to another side, without a grumble they lifted once more their living burdens and struggled with them to the light and heat. If you are going to be a nurse, I would advise you not to choose a ward in the ant-home! Are human parents, I wonder, as anxious to keep their children near to Christ, who is the Light of the World? Are they as eager as the ants to seize every chance?

A Bad Boy

Difficult as are the duties of the nurse when tending the infant, they become more worrying when that same infant has reached the thoughtless period of mischief, which we see reflected in the small boy of our own race. Once a little chap managed to elude his nurse's care, and

started for the gate of the city. He was still very young, for his face was pale. He thrust out his head into the light of day, and wild with glee, drank in the delights of freedom, running about excitedly. Alas! it was only for a brief moment; for in the next, his nurse had him by the collar, and would no doubt have soundly boxed his ears, except for the very good reason that he did not have any. The truant waved his antennæ wildly, and I fear that, from its vigorous movements, his language to his nurse was, to say the least, disrespectful. He also followed the small boy trick of stiffening his back, and clinging stoutly to a tiny twig; so that his conductor's strength was nearly exhausted before she managed to bustle him, twig and all, into the doorway. What happened inside was mercifully veiled from view, and is left to the imagination of the mothers amongst my readers! Even with the ants, "the way of transgressors is hard!"

Sacrifice for the Young

A gentleman had transferred a small colony of ants to his garden. They were of the warrior type, and on their mailed corslets they wore a dull red spot, like the cross on the shield of the templar knights. They are called the carpenter

ants ; for not content with earthen homes they cut their wood, and plane their boards, and floor their rooms, and build storey upon storey until they outrival the " sky-scrapers " of New York. Their work being finished, half a dozen took a morning stroll, and on the garden-path whom should they meet but a body of ashy-black ants. The latter are small, and masons by trade. They build their cities with earth and stones, cemented by the moisture of their lips.

Now as it is not unusual for carpenters and masons to disagree, the two companies came to blows. Of course the fight was one-sided, and the big carpenters returned, after slaying their foes, to relate with pride their deeds of prowess to the family circle. That was about twelve o'clock. Some of the conquered, however, were not quite dead, and managed to crawl back to their city, which lay at the foot of an apple tree, where they paid rent to the gardener by destroying the grubs fatal to his fruit—a mutual benefit.

By one o'clock there was a great commotion in this ant-heap. From every gate poured forth long lines of troops, and still the streets were crowded with eager legions. Hundreds fell by the way ; still the huge army marched on till met by the hurriedly marshalled carpenters.

A sharp command was passed along the attacking lines ; in a moment the little masons had changed their formation into groups of six. Each of these marched straight on an opponent. They were well drilled in their parts. One seized the antennæ, another a leg, while two leaped on the back. A seventh, which followed in the rear, crept underneath, and stabbed the helpless carpenter in the vital spot.

Soon the battle was over, and the last big warrior ant lay slain. Quickly the masons marched into the vanquished city. A whisper passed from mouth to mouth, " Their young ones are fat ! " Soon the captive babies were handed out. Fat, indeed, they were, for it took four of the little masons to carry a single infant ; but they rolled and pushed it along, regardless of its life, as a tasty morsel for their own hungry infants.

When the last plunder had been removed, and the city wrecked, the conquerors withdrew ; and now comes the touching moral of the tale. The silent city was left as a cemetery for its slain. Suddenly from out the débris a wounded ant struggled. She was a big carpenter, and in her mouth she carried a cradle, containing a baby. It was a heavy burden, but how tenderly she bore it ! Distracted with fear she would

stop, and then run, and though stumbling with terror and exhaustion, she never forsook her living charge. Away into the night she carried it, impelled by the hope that it might found in the future a new family of giants, to revenge her murdered race.

How the ant rebukes the careless parent who cares not for the salvation of his child. Out from the city of Destruction, where death reigns, let every father and mother seek to lead their children towards the mountains of Beulah and the Celestial City.

Caught through Curiosity

The young ant when it leaves its home for the first time imagines that it knows everything, but pride always goes before a fall, and it gets a pretty bad one. It has an enemy at whom it might well laugh if it were to meet him face to face on an open path. This creature is called the ant-lion; and though it looks formidable enough with its fierce jaws, it is really the laughing-stock of the insect world. It is such a clumsy being. It can only walk backwards, and so slowly that even a snail might beat it. Not much chance for it to catch anything for dinner, you would say. I can imagine the young ants

having great fun when they see the unwieldy monster, against which their nurses had seriously warned them. But it has learned one thing, worth knowing from its point of view, and that is the ant's weakness—curiosity. That little item of observation supplies it with all its dinners, and considerably reduces the population of the ant household !

When hungry it backs into an open piece of sand, and digs a little pit, and then lying down in the bottom of it covers itself with dust. It leaves, however, the tips of its jaws sticking out. Soon a young ant comes running along, and stopping in surprise says, "Dear me, what is this pit doing here, and what funny-looking things are these at its foot sticking up there through the sand?" It leans over the edge as far as it can to have a better look. Now the hole has been cleverly built, the rim is formed of soft sand that breaks away very easily ; and so before the ant has time to think, it falls with a mass of loose earth right into the pit. Then it learns too late what the jaws are, for they open, and it goes down inside to see what is below, only by that time it is dead, and the ant-lion has had its first course !

The Mysterious Thief

Ants are experts in the matter of theft. If they were men they would be first-rate burglars. They work so quietly and secretly that the harm is done before it is detected. There is a story of an Eastern general who went on a campaign. He carried with him a big strong box, which was very carefully guarded. In it was locked up the money with which to pay his soldiers. On the principle that it is best to get the work done before it is paid for, he put them off as long as possible with promises. At last they grew mutinous and demanded their money. He had the box then carried into the centre of the camp and publicly opened, when to his consternation he found that it was empty. All his cash had mysteriously vanished. The culprits were soon detected, they were the little white ants, and they had devoured every bit of the paper notes.

Once a gentleman, who lived in Trinidad, was surprised to find in a plate of almonds which was laid on the table for dessert that there was not a single one which was not hollow, the little ant thieves had eaten out the kernels, leaving only the shell behind to hide their deed.

In this we have a picture of how sin steals the treasures of the soul. It does its thieving

secretly. While it robs a man of spiritual life it tries to hide its theft under the husk of good outward appearances.

Cleanliness

The ants are very particular about keeping themselves and their houses clean. In their homes it is one everlasting spring cleaning, but then it is the women who manage their affairs, and the men have just to submit.

I can only cite one instance of this, and it is in connection with the curious custom of burying their dead. It was a Mrs Hatton of Sydney, Australia, who related the story. Her little son, who had been lying on the ground, had been bitten by a number of ants, and hearing his cry she hurried to see what was the matter. Picking the insects from him she killed them and threw them on the ground. When she returned a little later to the spot she found the ants busy with the funeral of the victims. A procession of forty pairs was moving towards a sandy space. The first two carried the dead body of an ant between them, while the other pair marched behind to relieve them of their burden. When the cemetery was reached graves were dug and the slain duly buried. There were seven ants,

however, who had shirked the work of digging. These were unceremoniously seized and executed on the spot, and their bodies flung into one common grave. So should we cast forth from the heart all evil thoughts and passions that corrupt.

Conversation

If the ants have no tongues they have antennæ which serve them as well. When the nurse wants the baby in its charge to open its mouth it gives it a tap on the head with its antennæ. The sentries posted all along the streets of the city thus pass on information from one to the other, and in a very short time the news of a threatened attack will be known to every citizen. Thus they can do without newspapers or telegraphs. When an army is marching there are large-headed ants who act as officers, and who walk alongside of the column. These issue their commands by the waving of their antennæ. When the ants speak it is always for a purpose, they have no time for idle gossiping. It makes one wish that human beings had more of the ant in them.

Strange Occupations

Originality is one of the strong points of the ant. It has the gift of striking out for itself new lines of business, and, indeed, it would require a large bureau to register all its trades. It still believes in royalty, and sometimes when the throne is heirless the citizens will seize a female and tear off her wings and make a queen of her. Then she is constantly surrounded with a bodyguard of about twenty, who feed her, and in a hundred ways show her affection and reverence.

Perhaps the most interesting class are the farmers. I might call them cattle-breeders. The ants have domesticated 584 different kinds of insects. Far more than man has done. The best known of these are the aphides or little green flies which are to be found on our rose leaves. These manufacture a kind of honey dew of which the ants are very fond, and they milk them like cows. The latter sometimes actually keep them in parks surrounded by mud fences. In winter they carry their eggs from the leaves on which the aphides have laid them into their warm ant homes, and then in spring take them back to the plant on which they had first been placed, so that when the egg is hatched

the young one may have the green leaf, its natural food, to feed on.

The clavigers are another kind of creature which the ant has domesticated. These are something like tiny beetles. They also produce a honey substance, and this attracts the ant, for it has a sweet tooth. The claviger has entirely lost its independence, for the ant has to feed and groom it just as a man has to do his horse.

The slave-makers are too well known to need describing. These are the big warrior ants, who raid the nests of the little black ones. They are too wise to take into their service their grown-up captives, for a man or ant born in freedom makes a bad slave ; but they carry off the babies and rear them as slaves. So dependent do they become on these servants, that if deprived of them they do not know how even to feed themselves and so die.

The bull-dog ant is a curious creature. It lives on certain leaves which produce tiny bulbs full of a sweet substance of which it is very fond. As a return for the hospitality of the leaves it protects them from their various enemies. No caterpillar, however tempted by the fresh green, dare trespass on the twig guarded by the fierce bull-dog ant. The umbrella ant,

which likes to cut these leaves and carries them as if they were parasols, has to turn aside if its fiercer cousin is in possession. Thus the treaty between these shrubs and their friends the bulldog ants is one of mutual benefit.

The bridge-makers are an ingenious class. They are given to constant emigrations, and thus have long marches. Ravines or rivulets do not stop their onward progress. They have learned how to make "the loop of life." When they come to a bank, a number link themselves together into a long rope. They let the wind carry one end across the water, and thus they form a living bridge over which the main army passes in safety.

The ants that take in lodgers for a living are very amusing. The guests pay for the accommodation provided by doing their share of the city's work. A study of the ways of this little creature reveals the fact that human nature has much in common with the humorous and ingenious methods of the enterprising ant, and shows the wisdom of the text: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise."

XIII

THE WASP

THE hornet gives us our Bible introduction to the wasp; it is the family's representative in Scripture. But as we are more familiar with its common relative, the wasp, we will make it our special study.

The wasp itself suffers more from its sting than any one else. Its good qualities do not get a chance of recognition because of that fatal little rapier sheathed in its extremity. All the wisdom packed away in its tiny brain is quite forgotten because people will think only of its one end. Yet it has another, and a good one too. If we judged by size, then in proportion it has more wisdom than a man, for in that small head there is crammed an amount of foresight and skill which might teach us many a lesson.

The Sacrifice of the Mother

What possible good can there be in a wasp? Well, if it did nothing more than show us the

example it does of motherly devotion, it would be worthy of all honour. The first chill of autumn slays its thousands in the wasp colony; the parent queen, exhausted with her labours, dies; the corpses of the workers strew the ground. Those that are still left feel as if there was nothing now to live for, and so they are determined to eat, drink, and be merry, and make the most of what remains of life. The young are dragged from their cells and devoured. There is "marriage and giving in marriage," and then the end comes. Silence descends on that once buzzing scene; the nest falls into ruins, and, like a rag-picker amongst its débris, moves the beetle, trying to make an honest living as a scavenger. But one wasp here and there has crawled away from that place of death. Hope has not vanished: there is a set purpose on her face, though she alone moves amongst the heaps of the slain, and like Æneas from another Troy, carries with her the future of the race. She is one of the young queens. To look at, there is little to distinguish her from the dead, were it not for that determination which flashes in her eye and with which she faces victoriously the storms and cold of winter. Great is the power of purpose!

She finds a piece of sacking, or perhaps crawls

under the kindly shelter of a roof. There she grasps in her jaws some bit of overhanging wool or shred of cloth, and holds on tightly. She draws her legs up close, and folds her wings, and, still gripping with her teeth, goes to sleep for the winter. The spring sun awakens her to work, and henceforth for her there is no rest. First, she does some prospecting ; and selects with care the site of her future nest. Then comes the building, and the marks of her jaws may be seen on many an oak fence where she has rasped off what one might call wafers of wood.

The homes of wasps differ as much as the houses of men. Some live in great cities where cell is added to cell with the regularity of a newly laid out American town, until a population of twenty thousand or more is reached. Others are solitary, and dwell " far from the madding crowd." These, like country people, are, I think, the more interesting. There is not the wonderful division of labour, or the strange laws for street traffic which you see in the hive ; but then you find wasps with more individuality, who do not perform their duties merely by rote, but who, as the Americans would say, find themselves so often " up against a proposition " that they have to use their brains to discover a way out.

The late Professor Romanes, in his *Animal Intelligence*, gives a curious example of this. He tells of a wasp trying in vain to lift a grasshopper which it had killed. When all its efforts proved futile, it pulled its prey to a maple tree about thirty feet away, and hauling it up the trunk until it had reached a considerable height, it caught it firmly, and jumping off into the air, flew away with it. Here surely we see a case of hard reasoning. The wasp argued that if only it could get a start with its burden, then it would be able to keep up, and the result proved that its idea was correct.

The motherly forethought of this insect has many illustrations. I wonder if ever there were babies more cared for than those of the wasp. The whole life of the mother is entirely devoted to them. She is often very particular in her work, and takes a great pride in the making and furnishing of her home. Mr Peckham describes one little mother whom he watched. She dug very carefully a hole in the ground, and then searched about for a nice-sized pebble, which she placed at the foot. Into this nest were carried three caterpillars. She knew the ways, or rather the hunger, of infants. Wasp babies have just as great a love for the caterpillar as human ones have for the bottle. In

The Bible Zoo

fact, a healthy new-born wasp demands three caterpillars for its first meal. There is an appetite for you ! It orders a dish at least ten times its own size. That beats all the babies I ever heard of ! But more than that, it has a fastidious taste, and wants them not merely raw but living, the little cannibal ! So you see the mother has rather a difficult task. The caterpillars which she stores up in the nest have got to live three or four days until the egg is hatched. How is she going to manage to bury them alive ? They are not likely to stay in the larder of their own accord. Some wasps use their sting with great skill to stupefy the caterpillars ; others have a crueller method—they cut off all their legs, so that they cannot run away. Thus the young larva may suck as soon as it is born the life-blood of the captive caterpillar. Wasps ought to reverence their mothers ; but perhaps they are like other grown-up children, who sometimes forget.

The Sound of the Wings

The buzz of the wasp always warns us of its presence when flying. The noise is caused by the movement of the wings, and here we learn a lesson in quickness. All lazy-bones should listen to this sound. “ Before you could wink,”

is a common phrase to denote swiftness ; but again the wasp breaks the record, for in one second it moves its wings 190 times. It certainly makes the most of the passing moment. The buzz is caused by this rapid action. It varies certainly in its notes, sometimes shrill, and sometimes deep ; but that is due to whether the insect is approaching or going away from you. Just as, for instance, the whistle of a train sounds differently in your ear according as the engine is rushing towards you, or receding from you.

Since the wasp is not liked as a neighbour, its buzz is generally received as a warning, and we keep out of the way if we can. A clever little insect called the sandfly has taken note of this ; and it has learned to imitate the sound the wasp makes, and since acquiring this accomplishment it finds life much easier ; for when its enemies hear that buzz they scatter like wild-fire.

It is perhaps a mere fancy, but when I pass street corners, and overhear the buzz of conversation from groups of idlers, I somehow think of the wasp, and wish that young lads would connect the hum with the sting ! For idle talk, though pleasant to the ear, leaves behind it a prick that hurts the soul.

The Sense of Direction

Although her more favoured cousin has given her name to what we call a "bee-line," the wasp also may claim some proficiency in the art of short-cuts. Sir John Lubbock tells of one which came into his room : its home was at the other side of the house, and at once it made for the closed window nearest to it. Of course when it encountered the glass it took it a long time to learn that there was no right of way, and only then did it return, and fly back as it had entered.

Now this sense is not mere instinct ; for the wasp devotes great pains to the study of geography. In fact, when you feel it buzzing uncomfortably round your head, and hovering threateningly in front of your face, it is really only trying to commit to memory the shape of your head, so that it may know you again, and not, as some imagine, trying to select a suitable place for erecting another bump by the aid of its sting !

Watch a wasp after it has dug its nest. Before it flies away in the search for food, it makes a thorough survey of its surroundings ; and though it has no chart on which to pencil a hasty sketch, it notes all the leading landmarks in its tiny brain ; then, rising in the air, off it

darts into the dim distance. I would hand the hint on to the Boy Scouts : they ought to study the methods of the wasp !

One of these insects had caught a caterpillar too big to carry. It was loath to give up so tempting a prey, but what was it to do ? At last it hit on a plan : it cut its victim into three pieces, and leaving two on a leaf in a bush, started off with the third. But before it flew away it made for a stick lying on the ground a few yards distant, and buzzing round this for some seconds took its bearings, and then bore its burden home to its nest. While it was gone Professor Romanes shifted the booty which it had left behind. On its return it went straight to the stick, and from there darted into the bush. When it could not find its caterpillar, it came back once more to the stick to take its direction afresh, and again sped for the deserted leaf. This was repeated several times, until, beginning to widen its survey, it at last found what it sought some inches distant. Admiration should deepen into imitation, for we sadly need the home instinct of the wasp. God has given us landmarks which should guide us to the soul's true shelter, yet how many wander aimlessly as if they did not know the way. How the wasp should shame us !

The Sacredness of Property

The solitary wasp at least is not a Communist. It believes in the rights of possession. It knows also the difference between honesty and theft, and thus shows the lurkings of a conscience. Am I making too great a claim for my client? Well, let me give you an example that will speak for itself. A plucky little wasp had with great skill and courage taken captive a large spider and borne it off to its home. This was not an easy task, and aroused attention. It attracted the notice of a big wasp, who followed stealthily behind, just as a cat stalks a bird. It slipped quietly from branch to branch, eyeing carefully the panting toiler, but not daring to venture an open attack. At last the nest was reached. The little wasp laid its burden on the ground, and ran into its hole to see if all was ready. This was the other's chance. In an instant it swooped down and made off with the spider. Its owner must have heard a suspicious sound, for it darted out just in time to see its property being stolen by a robber twice its own size. It did not pause for an instant to think of the odds it was facing. The passion of the wronged roused its fury, and it darted savagely at the marauder. The thief did not waste time or

thought either, but, dropping its prey, bolted ; although, had it stood its ground, there could have been no uncertainty as to the issue of the fight—but then “ conscience makes cowards of us all.” That is the only explanation I can think of. The one had right on its side ; the other knew that it was in the wrong.

Again an experiment was tried by replacing with another the spider which a wasp had captured and laid beside its hole. To all intents and purposes, surely a victim as fat and eatable would do just as well ; but if there are rogues amongst the wasps, there are others with a strict sense of honesty, and every one on whom this device was tried acted exactly in the same way. When the wasp came out of its nest it ran to get its spider, but as soon as it came near it saw that it was not the one which it had caught, and refused to touch that for which it had not worked. After a fruitless search for its own, it flew away to get another—honest little creature ! If ever a boy or girl is tempted to take what does not belong to them, I would have them remember this lesson of the wasp.

Skill in Surgery

The wasp has reduced surgery to a fine art. The real purpose of its sting is not to kill but to

chloroform its prey. If you watch it attack a spider its own size, you will see how careful it is. First they wrestle, and with wonderful self-control the wasp keeps its rapier in its sheath. Over they roll on top of each other, and as they struggle you catch a glimpse of a flash of red from the corselet of the wasp beneath the dull brown of the spider's body. At first you think that the latter is to be victor, but all the time the wasp is manœuvring for position. It is thinking of the needs of its future offspring, and for them a dead spider would be of little service. Gradually it wriggles itself round, not minding whether it is above or below its opponent, until it can get its sting opposite the neck ; then out darts the fatal weapon, and the poor spider falls limp and motionless : but it is not dead. It will live in that condition for several days, and that is just where the art of this little surgeon comes in.

It is the same with the caterpillar. Some times the tussle is a long one, its prey rolling and unrolling itself and contorting its body until the wasp almost despairs of a chance. But it does not give in ; if it is not able to turn the caterpillar on its back, it will in the end actually lift it bodily into the air, and then bending round its own abdomen, dart its sting between the

third and fourth segments of its victim, which succumbs at once. Cruel little tyrant! And yet its murderous instinct is prompted by love—the devotion of the mother to her unborn children.

XIV

THE BEE

"LET us pay a visit to the bee this morning," you say.

All right, but which kind of bee shall we start with? There are as big differences amongst bees as there are between the human races. If you were to place a university graduate and a savage from Africa side by side you would not get a greater distinction than between the uncivilized, solitary bee and its cultured, city-bred relative. Let us visit first

The Country Cousin

She is a lonely bee, and very old-fashioned. She does not believe in improvements, the methods of her grandmother are good enough for her; she sneers in her own way at patent hives and such-like, just as the Eastern farmer with his sickle might at the steam-thresher. Her home is a hole in the earth, about the size of a small lead-pencil. She is shrewd enough, for if she can find a house to let without rent

The Bee

III

she takes possession at once. There are generally a good many of these in the earth. Some belong to the worm who goes out too early for a walk and never returns. When the bee settles down, the first thing she does is to shut the back door. People who live alone will understand what that means. She builds it up with sand and stones so that no enemy can get in that way.

Next, she has got to furnish her house, and it is worth while going with her on her shopping expedition. You see, she has not learned the art of making wax, which is the material her city cousins use for furnishing their beautiful homes. Without it how can she possibly make the cosy cells and snug cribs for her future babies? She flies away to a tree, which is the special shop at which she deals. Each kind of bee has a preference in trees: some prefer the lilac, others the elm or the horse-chestnut. Here she orders so many fractions of a square inch of leaf.

Being a bit of a dressmaker, she cuts out the pattern for herself, and carries her goods back to her home, and shapes the piece of leaf into a little round cell. When she has made as many as she wishes she lays an egg in each, and leaves a nice store of honey for the hungry infant when

it comes out. Then taking a last look round to see that everything is all right, she goes out and locks the front door behind her. She secures the mouth so firmly that no visitor can possibly find entrance, and then she buzzes off with a happy, contented mind to prepare another similar home.

Poor, devoted, silly bee ! Despite all her care she cannot keep the enemy out, bolts and locks are useless for such a cunning thief. Her foe is one of her own kind, the cuckoo-bee, a thorough waster and scamp. This bee will neither work, nor dig, nor store up honey ; it lives by its wits and thieving. When the solitary bee was out shopping it slipped into the deserted house, and deposited one of its own eggs near to the cupboard where the honey was kept. When the unsuspecting mother returned she never noticed what had happened, but locked the door, thinking that all was secure.

Now, as often happens in this world, evil gets the start, it is the egg of the robber that is hatched first ; and by the time the right infant has appeared all the honey has been eaten up, and there is another fat cuckoo-bee in the world ready to begin its career of thieving.

That is the way with sin. When I see a girl listening eagerly to gossip I know she is leaving

the front door of her soul open, and Satan is sure enough to deposit the evil thought which in time will produce the unkindly deed. Or when a boy in his anger has forgotten to shut his mouth, it is just the same thing that happens. It is not so much the words which are coming *out* as the spirit which is going *in* that will cost him dear.

Village Dwellers

I will introduce you now to our big, good-natured friend, the humble-bee. It has learned to live in small communities, and in a way has adopted some of the habits of city life. For instance, it has discovered how to make wax, and line its nest with it. This, I suppose, must be more comfortable than furniture made of leaves, at least it is more fashionable. For you know that in all the big bee cities there is nothing but wax used.

One custom of the humble-bee I will refer to which shows how it has begun to appreciate the benefits of partnership in work. In the early morning a sound is heard to issue from its nest. If we look in we will see one bee standing in the centre of the little village working its wings in rapid motion, and thus causing a humming sound. If for any reason it has to stop,

another bee at once takes its place. The only explanation that has been given for such a strange action is that it is rousing the others to work. Just as in many a small place the town bell rings in the morning to awaken the inhabitants. I wonder how many such bees some of our boys and our girls would require in the morning! and perhaps if we could only get the loan of a few and distribute them through certain houses on the Sunday morning our churches might be better filled!

The Town-bred Bee

When we come into a city of eighty thousand we find that bee life is highly developed.

1. The first thing that impresses us is the division of labour. Put a swarm into an empty hive, and at once each one seems to know exactly what it has to do. Very soon a living chain is suspended from the top and a thousand bees devote themselves to the mysterious manufacture of wax. They hang there for perhaps eighteen hours. Then one suddenly disentangles itself from the group, and climbing to the top takes from under her scales a square of newly made wax and fixes it to the dome as the key-stone for the houses and streets which are to be built.

Another follows, and begins where she left off, and then another, each silently, quietly doing her part, and disappearing as soon as her individual task is finished. Then up that living ladder comes another bee, different from the rest ; she has no wax to add, but carries herself with a business-like air. It is her duty to mould out of the wax placed ready the first cell. There must be some wonderful plan in her brain ; for without a moment's hesitation she begins to give shape to what is as yet formless. She also vanishes before the cell is complete, and other two follow in quick succession until under their touch the work is finished, and the first chamber in the big city stands completed.

There are no strikes, no lock-outs in this community, because each one works for the benefit of the whole race and in perfect harmony. That is the secret of success in church as well as hive. "All together and each one for the common cause," is the best maxim for bees and men.

2. Their faith in the future is another striking fact. The bee does not labour for herself. Two or three flowers would provide all the food she required, whereas she will sometimes visit three hundred in an hour. Why all this extra

toil? It is in order that the future of the race may be assured, that food may be provided for those who will come long after the faithful worker herself is dead.

What a rebuke to human beings who live so much for the pleasure of the moment, and make so little provision for the eternal world!

3. Their sense of honour is another thing in which their example might be followed. Though each is armed with a powerful sting none will ever draw it on the queen mother. Next time you are tempted to sting with some sharp word your mother's heart, remember the bee, and do not let it put you to shame with its sense of honour.

XV

THE BEETLE

I HAVE been searching through the Bible to find a beetle. I thought that I had discovered one, in Lev. xi. 22, where it says, "These of them ye may eat, the beetle," etc. However, I see that scholars have their doubts about the meaning of the Hebrew word used, and besides they do not think it possible for a beetle to come into such a verse. Perhaps they forget that it is just like the beetle to creep into the most unexpected places!

Still, if the scholars have shut one door they have opened another. Several suggest that some of the flies which plagued the Egyptians were winged beetles. If this were so, then it adds a fresh meaning to this punishment, for the Egyptians worshipped the beetle as a god, and to-day silver ones are often found in old tombs. So it served those stubborn idolaters right that these insects, which they adored as gods, should become their pests. Now, having made good the Bible claim of the beetle, let me try

and tell you some of the lessons which it teaches.

1. The Secrecy of the Beetle

We will study for a moment one member of this enterprising family—the furniture beetle. The larva of this insect burrows its way into the legs of tables and chairs. It has a second cousin called the book-worm. This latter creature bored its way once through twenty-seven volumes, which stood in a row on a shelf, and made such a clean tunnel that a string could be passed through the hole from end to end and the entire set of books lifted at once. Perhaps it accomplished more than any reader did in going from cover to cover !

The furniture beetle keeps to wood, and knows how to make a snug home for its young. It has a less prosperous brother who lives out of doors, and whose young feed on the leaves of turnips. There they are exposed to so many dangers that they have to hurry up, and eat just as fast as they can, and grow big, or else they will be picked up by birds or destroyed in other ways. They have only a week in which to pass through childhood and become fully fledged beetles. The baby in the snug little furniture cell has no need to make such haste ; no enemy

can get at it there, and it has plenty to eat, for it is fond of wood. So instead of seven days it takes three years to become a "grown up." Full of mischief these months are, for the little grub eats its way through the legs of the chair, and yet so secretly that no one would suspect its presence. Unless some day a very stout person suddenly sits down, and the hollow legs give way under the weight!

There I think we have a good picture of how sin acts in the soul. If we harbour a temptation it goes on eating its way into the heart like the beetle grub. Outwardly the character may appear all right, but one day it will collapse unless that sin is killed. How can we do this? Well, I think that we may get a hint from the way in which this insect can be destroyed. There are two cures. Either the infected chair may be left in a tight case with a saucer containing sulphide of benzine and carbon, the fumes of which will kill the grub; or it may be placed in a chamber where the temperature is raised to over eighty degrees, when the result will be the same. Now, that is just what we need to do with sin. Place the heart in a position where it will be spiritually heated, bring it into the warm atmosphere of the Church and real Christian fellowship, and soon the evil will be stopped.

Above all, let the glow of Christ's love fill the soul, and then all germs will disappear.

II. The Sound of the Beetle

On a warm summer night you may sometimes hear a strange tick, tick. It is one beetle calling to another. Mr Frederick Smith of the British Museum tried once to learn the language of this insect. He put two or three in a small box, and then tapped on the table four or five times with a pencil. Instantly they raised themselves on their four legs and bobbing their heads struck the bottom of the box with their mandibles, thus giving in reply several ticks. How responsive this little creature is! And how dull in comparison is man! You remember what Christ says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Have you never answered His knocking? Then surely the very beetle ought to make you ashamed.

III. The Soaring of the Beetle

The water beetle, which lives in a pond during the day, flies at night. It lives thus as it were in two worlds. During the sunshine you may see it head downwards in some pool, holding on with its forefeet to the bottom, while it breathes

through the tail end of its body, which is just raised above the surface. When darkness falls it lets go, and comes to the top, and spreading out its wings flies merrily over the fields.

“ O'er folded blooms
On swirls of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms,
And bumps along the dusk.”

When it sees below the gleam of water it will close its wings and drop with a splash into the pool. One night a gardener heard a crack on the roof of his conservatory. When he searched for the cause he found a dead beetle. The foolish insect had mistaken the glitter of glass for the glint of a lake, and dropped, expecting a cool dip instead of a sudden death.

God has given us the wings of faith that we also should soar upward. But how often does the fascination of some false pleasure draw us down, and we fall perhaps never to rise !

IV. The Strength of the Beetle

This insect knows how to grip. It cannot be matched for the power of holding on to a thing. Once a lady was emptying some water-

cross from a basin when she gave a cry of terror : " Oh, look at that dreadful thing ! " It was only a poor beetle holding on for dear life to the china bottom, and far more frightened than the lady at losing the protection of the plants.

When St Helena was captured from the Dutch in 1673, a British fleet tried in vain to force a landing near the town. Then sailing round behind the island, where the cliffs were unguarded because they were precipitous, the admiral sent a storming party ashore. But the heights seemed too steep to scale. A young midshipman, however, offered to climb them alone. He took a string with which to pull up a rope ladder behind him. He had almost reached the top, when he slipped ; down he fell, while those below held their breath. Was he to be dashed in pieces ? No, he suddenly gripped a projecting rock, and hung on with grim determination.

In order to encourage him, his captain shouted from the boat below, " Hold fast, Tom ! " He did, and then as he regained his breath he gradually hauled himself up until he got his footing. At length he reached the top, and pulled up the rope ladders. Then the sailors swarmed up, and forming on the top, charged down on the

unsuspecting Dutch and won the day. That point on the cliffs is still called "Hold fast Tom." So children, learn to "hold fast that which is good." Cling to Christ with the same determination, and you will be safe.

XVI

THE MOTH

THE other day two little girls, Gracie and Nell, brought me in a cardboard box, the cocoon of a Lappet Moth. What a strange little house it was, and how curious its inhabitant. The latter ought to have been a respectable-looking caterpillar. It was that when it went in ; but after it got settled down in its new home it took off its skin, just as one might his coat, and put on instead a dusky-coloured cloak, more roomy certainly, but not so pretty.

1. We will speak of its dwelling. In Job xxvii. 18 we read that the worldly man " buildeth his house as a moth." What does that mean ? Let us look at the moth's early home, and perhaps we will be able to guess. The caterpillar has certainly built it as if he meant it to last all its life. It has interwoven the brown hairs of its body with a silvery silk, until it has formed a covering that on the outside looks something like brown paper, though softer and thinner. Inside it plasters it with a soft powdery material,

that makes it appear quite furnished and very cosy. Surely now it will enjoy a long period of hard-earned leisure. The grub you see has already endured many dangers and difficulties since the day it first crawled out of its egg, nearly a year before. Likely as not, it was on an autumn day when the chill breath of approaching winter warned it that if it was to grow fat before all the leaves faded, not a moment must be lost. How it ate in those days! Many a gardener lost his temper as he saw his bushes stripped of their leaves, but the grub did not take time to think. It had a race with winter; and if it won, the margin of victory was small. By the time the vegetation ceased it had just grown big enough to stand the long cold months of slow starvation. How it welcomed spring, and the bursting of the fresh buds! What an appetite it had, and how angry it made the gardener as he saw some of his best bushes stripped of their leaves! And now about the end of June it has stopped feeding, and thinks that it has earned a rest, and so it builds its snug home. Job had not heard Christ's parable about the rich man when he spoke these words; yet it is all here. The point is, that the grub might well use the same expression; "Soul, thou hast much goods laid

up for many years; take thine ease." But four weeks have scarcely passed when that sleep is rudely disturbed. The cosy house is split open, and its inhabitant called forth to another existence. Out crawls a perfect moth. For awhile it stands upon the branch until the air has dried its wings; then it spreads them out beautiful in their chestnut colouring and peach-like bloom. The snug house of which it has once been so proud is now despised and forgotten as it flits away over the fields on the balmy breeze. No wonder Job says, with a touch of satire, that the worldling "buildeth his house as a moth." He forgets that it too can only last for a brief time compared to eternity, and that the soul will be summoned to a higher sphere, and the world itself pass away.

2. The destructiveness of this insect is our next thought. Job seems to be an authority on moths, for in chap. xiii. 28 we read: "He consumeth as a garment that is moth-eaten." Christ also used the same illustration when He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt."

You know that as soon as one appears in a room some person is sure to say, "Look, there is a moth! Kill it." Why? Because of the havoc it will do. The most beautiful garments

have been ruined by this creature, as it eats its way through them ; and the worst of it is, that it does the mischief secretly. It is a night insect. When the sun is shining it hides away as if ashamed of its work ; but as soon as it is dark out it comes. How like sin that is ! I wonder if we have any moths of that kind trying to destroy our souls—such as bad thoughts, which would be ashamed to show their face in the presence of God ; evil passions that gnaw at the heart. No person would surely put their most prized dress or coat within reach of the moths, neither should we expose our souls to the sins that will hurt them ; but as soon as a temptation approaches, let us say, “ Look, there is a moth ! Kill it.”

3. The defence of the moth suggests another lesson. I said it only worked at night : where, then, is it in the daytime ? Often before your very eyes, but you cannot recognise it, because of its resemblance to the object on which it rests. The Lappet Moth, for instance, copies exactly the brown and withered leaves on which it rests. Its lower wings when closed project in a curious way beyond the upper, and with their jagged edges look exactly like shrivelled leaves. Here again we have the same truth which the “ stick ” caterpillar taught us. When

we nestle close to Christ, we take on His likeness, and so escape beyond the reach of sin.

4. The danger of the moth is our last lesson. Our study of this insect would **not** be complete if we overlooked the fatal fascination that so often proves its ruin. Though it is a creature of the night, it cannot resist the enchantment of a bright light. It will rush heedlessly towards a lamp, and even after it has fallen with singed wings, if it can rise again it will dart into the flame. If you wish to collect specimens of this insect, walk to the outskirts of the town late at night, and there, beside some lamp-post, you will find them lying on the ground with aching heads, having dashed themselves against the globes. Thus you can pick them up and "bottle" them at your leisure. What a picture that gives us of the great enemy of souls, as he moves in the darkness to the spot where he has lighted some flaming temptation. There on the ground he finds the helpless, struggling souls of those who, with moth-like blindness, have rushed into sin, and, though wounded and warned, have returned again and again until the wings of faith are shrivelled, and they can no longer rise.

XVII

THE LOCUST

THE palmerworm, the locust, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, four little insects all in one verse ! When I read Joel i. 4 I thought that I had unearthed a rich spadeful of sermon bait, that would keep me going for four months ; but when I examined my " find " I discovered that these were only four different kinds of the same insect—the locust. The list begins with the one that does the least harm, the *gnawing locust*. This is really the baby insect, and though it is greedy enough, for it is called in Hebrew " the great eater," yet its tiny teeth are not sufficiently strong to devour root and stem, so it contents itself with merely scraping the surface. The second kind is called the *swarming locust*, because it multiplies so quickly. About a hundred eggs are laid in each nest, and these are packed so closely that when eight weeks later the young are hatched it seems as if the very dust had wakened into life, as if every grain of sand was moulded into a maggot which begins to creep.

Dinner is the first demand, and the young locust asks what is there to eat. At first it has no wings and is very like our grasshopper, only its appetite would put to shame that of any other creature. As its birthplace is generally amongst the sand, it has to go some distance in search of its breakfast. Its mother is not so thoughtful as that of the wasp, who always has a tasty meal ready for the new arrival. If it has not wings at the start, it possesses a wonderful pair of hind legs ; with these it can spring at a single jump two hundred times its own length. That would be like a man clearing in one leap a whole quarter of a mile, or springing over a mountain twelve hundred feet high ! With leaps like that the new-born colony make straight for the nearest vegetation, and after such violent exercise we need perhaps scarcely wonder that they devour every green leaf. Then their wings grow, and they start on their real travels, and will fly for a thousand miles, always on the search for food.

The third kind mentioned is termed the *licking locust*, or the greedy feeder. These reduce eating to a fine art. When the principal repast is over, they do not hurry away at once, but they wait to pick up the crumbs and lick the place clean. We may well pity the poor

farmer who has them for his guests. He need not hope that a single blade will escape their keen eye. They believe in doing things thoroughly, even to the stripping of a garden bare.

The last class referred to is what is called the *consuming locust*. They are the biggest and the strongest members of this family, and the least dainty. They will eat anything—even hard wood. If you once let them get inside your front door, they will literally eat you out of house and home by devouring the very walls of your dwelling. Now let us learn three lessons from these ravenous insects.

Determination

Their success depends upon their perseverance. When they set out on their march nothing will prevent them from reaching their goal. All the obstacles man can invent are powerless to check their advance. The biggest batteries would be futile to stay the progress of this hostile army, which will do more havoc to a country than the invasion of a human foe. "They shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks," is how Joel describes their attack. No walls can stop them, no ditches arrest them. Kindle big fires in their path, and

they will march straight into the flames. The foremost may be burned to cinders, but those behind come rushing on, and even the fire cannot keep pace with their increasing numbers. On they crowd, faster than it can shrivel them to ashes. Above the consumed, the half-burned bodies soon are heaped, and over these tread ever fresh masses. In vain the breathless flames struggle to devour them. The myriads slain are nothing to those still advancing, and soon the fiercest fire is overpowered, smothered beneath their weight ; and long before even the vanguard has crossed the smoking zone the last flicker of flame has been extinguished, and the rear of the great army knows nothing of the victory won as it climbs the mounds of scorched and trampled dead.

That is the kind of determination we need if we are going to do something useful for Christ. He demands a strength of resolution which will not allow the soul to be easily turned from the straight path. The history of the Church has been in some respects just such an onward march. First there were the martyrs, who advanced fearlessly into the flames of the stake, then over their ashes and across the quenched fires have passed rank upon rank of ransomed saints. Would you not like to join in that

procession? The one condition is that you keep step, and that you go on, despite all danger and difficulty.

Destruction

To understand the havoc wrought by the locust you must picture the size of the swarm. Like a black cloud they will shut out the sun, and turn noonday into night. The noise made by the rustling of their wings is deafening. Faces turn pale at their approach. If the wind that is blowing them along should die away, then like unnumbered flakes of snow they flutter down upon the ground. The fields on which they descend may be rich as the Garden of Eden, but they are left bared of every green leaf, and desolate as a wilderness. The rich promise of spring, that may have clothed the land with verdure, is turned into the bleakness of winter, and the trees are left stripped as on a December day.

There we may have a picture of the ruin caused by sin. Like the locust sin multiplies quickly. If one is unchecked it will soon beget another, and so the sky of the sinner's soul is rapidly darkened. God is shut out; and then some day, when the little thoughtless sins have accumulated and become a great dark cloud, they

descend upon the life, and blight its fairest hopes and destroy its lingering faith and love. Watch, therefore, the locust of sin in the heart, and do not give it a chance to increase.

Defence

Walls, ditches, fire, we have seen, cannot protect a garden from the ravages of this insect. The only safeguard from this danger is to do what has been successfully tried in Cyprus—to destroy the nests and eggs before the young are born. This is possible, because the breeding-places are together on high, barren districts. Once a locust has reached its winged state then all attempt at destruction is hopeless. Begin young, that is the warning lesson we learn from the study of this creature. Capture the young life for Christ before sin has had a chance to develop, destroy the places that breed evil. Sin, like the locust, requires a desert in the heart in which to beget its wicked thoughts and deeds. Let there be therefore no vacant spot, no idle hour in the young life ; fill the soul with the love of Christ, so that every inch of the heart may be turned into the garden of the Lord, fragrant, beautiful. As the locust cannot breed amidst the flowers, but seeks the lonely wastes in which

to bring forth its young, so amidst the roses of love and the lilies of purity sin cannot get a chance. Once the desert of the human heart has been made a garden, then sin will be destroyed, because its breeding-places will be abolished.

XVIII

THE EARWIG

WHERE is the earwig referred to in the Bible? You know how this creature loves to hide itself, so you may be sure that it will not be easy to find. Of course you will not see that word anywhere in Scripture, but that does not mean that you cannot discover a trace of this insect: you do not always need to name a person to suggest him. Suppose that there is a family of five children, Ian, Ada, Alistair, Dora, Gordon, and a friend invites by name the first three to a party, that means that the other two, Dora and Gordon, are to stay at home, although their names may not be mentioned in the letter. Now in Leviticus xi. 23 we have the family to which the earwig belongs directly mentioned, and the writer goes on to name in detail some of its members, such as, the locust, the beetle, the grasshopper, and, in fact, one would expect the earwig to be the very one next mentioned; but there is a sudden stop. These three are accepted for food: the others, which are left

unnamed, are to be rejected. There is no need to speak of each in turn, but a general description is added so that there can be no mistake. The list of unclean insects includes those which go on all-fours, and yet have wings. At once we think of the next member of the family, the earwig, which is common in Syria, and we see at once that it is meant.

This is a creature which no one cares much about. Perhaps your aunt will shrug her shoulder at its very mention. I think I can guess why it is disliked : it is too fond of secrecy : it is always trying to hide, and people begin to suspect its motives. You know we always trust frank people, but those who act in underhand ways lose at once our esteem and confidence. So people have given the earwig a worse name than it deserves, for they imagine that if it is so anxious to conceal its presence it must be up to some mischief or other.

It Hides Itself

When night falls the earwig comes out ; during the day it hides. That is why you perhaps never knew before that it had wings. You had never seen it flying, because you had only watched it when the sun was shining, and then

its one effort was to run away from you and bury itself out of sight. But when the darkness comes it grows active. Running out from its shelter, it spreads its beautiful wings, which are like tissue paper, and off it goes for an excursion in the air.

I know something else which only ventures forth when the brightness of God's presence has been shut out and the heart is dark, and that is sin. Like the earwig, it spreads its wings in the gloom. How different this creature appears in the night from what it is in the daytime. It is exactly the same with sin. Now if we do not want to have our hearts filled with evil thoughts, which are like those horrid winged insects that flit about in the blackness, we must have them full of the love of Christ, who is the Light of the world; and before His presence sin, like the earwig, will hide its face.

It Hides its Home

The earwig makes its home under the ground. It is here the mother lays her eggs and sits on them like a hen until they are hatched. Now, she is not much good at digging herself, her feet are not made for that kind of work. She therefore does not build her own house, but

looks out for one "to let." The worm has always plenty without a tenant. If you wish to know the reason you must ask the thrush or the starling, or any other early bird. Now these worm burrows are beautifully built. Some of them are six or seven feet long, and round the mouth they are papered with dead leaves which are neatly gummed to the walls. The earwig likes a furnished house best, and so when she finds an open door, and no one inside, she walks in and takes possession, and rigs up a snug nursery in the sanctum of the worm. The owner ought to have put up a notice that trespassers would be prosecuted, when he went out for his morning stroll; but then he thought that he would return. He had forgotten that there were birds about.

We should be careful what doors we leave open. There is one intruder always prowling round our hearts trying to find an entrance, and that is sin. Idleness leaves the door ajar, and so does temper. When a boy gets into a rage, or a girl into a huff, the door of the heart is flung wide so that evil may find a ready entrance. It is then that sin, like the sly earwig, creeps in and hatches the eggs of future bad words and deeds.

It Hides its Wings

I wonder if you know where the earwig keeps its wings. It is just like a Chinese puzzle to try and guess. But what is most wonderful is to see the kind of wings which it can suddenly produce. When spread out they are fan shaped, and are almost transparent. Like delicate gauze they flutter in the air, and are objects of real beauty. You wonder how it is possible for them to become folded up into a tiny space. There are many fans which have a marvellous way of contracting into small bulk, but I do not think that any can equal in this the earwig's wings. The movements by which it closes up are very complicated. You have, perhaps, often noticed the strange pair of pincers at the tail of this insect and wondered what use they could be. Well, they act like hands, and bending round give the last touches in tucking away the wings under their shields which hide them from view.

I can imagine some boy saying, "If I were an earwig, and had such a handsome pair of wings, I would not be ashamed of them and hide them, and only bring them out when nobody could see. No, I would be showing them constantly in the broad light of day."

What about the spiritual wings of faith, which

God has given every soul ? They are beautiful, and powerful, and meant to lift us up to heavenly regions ; yet how many are ashamed of them, and go about as if they had none, or only exercise them when they are out of sight of any human eye. We ought to be proud of our faith in God and show it. Some day when the light goes out and darkness falls we will need those wings of faith to bear us to Heaven. Let us not imitate the earwig and conceal them, but be brave enough to declare before the world our faith in Christ.

XIX

THE MOSQUITO

THE manufacture of a falsehood is very like the making of a mosquito. Possibly you smile at the comparison ; but then, you may never have passed a night on a Canadian swamp or seen the inside life of one of those small communities in the homeland where gossips are bred. If you have, then I think your smile will be one of assent and not incredulity !

The Initial Stage

A fully developed mosquito is as unlike what it was in its babyhood days as a robust falsehood is to the first suggestion which gave it birth. It is not this strange dissimilarity that is the only mark of resemblance between the two. As we follow the life history of the one we are, in fact, giving a pictorial sketch of the growth of the other.

The mosquito begins life upside down. Its mother has laid about three hundred eggs, which she bound together into the form of a tiny boat,

and launched on the waters of some pool. This curious craft goes bobbing up and down on the top of the little waves, and is so perfectly made that it always floats on the surface. At the end of three days a small door is pushed open on each egg, and out comes the larva. Only you would never think that it was some day to become a fly. It is a wriggling little fish-like creature half an inch long, and it hangs head down with just the tip of its tail, through which it breathes, above the water.

A truth with the wrong end up marks also the initial stage of the worst kind of falsehood. You remember what Tennyson says :

“ That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies :

That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,

But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight.”

We may take an illustration from the life of Christ. The malicious gossips of His day called Him “ a wine-bibber.” They had seen Him at table with men who drank, and they ignored the truth of the situation, that it was love for souls and not for wine that had brought Him there. When recounting the incident they

said nothing about His compassion or His condescension; they only spoke of the goblets and what was in them. They had got a hold of a fact, but they turned it right about and so made it into a falsehood.

The Transformation Stage

After about three weeks the larva of the mosquito begins to undergo a change. It becomes a pupa or chrysalis. Now the outward case is more like a mask than a part of the real insect, which practically becomes detached inside from its outer skin. There it bends itself double and begins to develop wings and legs and its wonderful blood-sucking apparatus. Who would think *that* the innocent looking mummy, which floats like a dead object on the water sheltered inside a steel factory! Well, if the five lancets, which it is making for future use, are not actually composed of that material, they are as sharp and deadly as if they were.

The lie also has its pupa stage. It is still unspoken, but the inverted truth is harboured in the mind, and is being turned over and over, and every time imagination adds to it some fresh exaggeration, until it might well fail to recognise itself, and thus it becomes fitted for its fell work.

The Stinging Stage

There comes at last a day when the mosquito straightens out on the surface of the water and prepares for its new life. Its skin splits open all down the back, and there emerges the head of a fly; then it pulls out its long legs, pair by pair, and now arrives the critical moment. If a gust of wind were to upset the empty skin before it is quite free, its delicate wings would get wet, and it would drown in the very water in which it had been swimming a few moments before. However, it does not waste time. Like a boy who has got a new toy, it wants to try at once its new gauzy wings, so it stretches them out and flies away. When it alights on the hand of its victim it brings down its long proboscis, which resembles somewhat an elephant's trunk and extends its divided lobes until they get a firm grip of the skin. Then it is ready for action. Inside this proboscis are the five knives, and they at once begin cutting their way through the flesh, going deeper and deeper until the blood spurts out. Now a tube is inserted, and through it the blood is sucked up. If this were all the damage it did we might be content with calling it merely a marauder and not a murderer; but, alas, it

often kills people by the hundreds. You see it does not take the care it ought to when it goes from person to person, and unlike a good surgeon it leaves its lancets unwiped. The consequence is that it thus carries germs from the blood of one man to another. These may be virulent microbes, that benefit by the change, and in their new surroundings reproduce themselves in millions, and thus cause fever.

All this is true of the falsehood. The critical moment is when it leaves the lips of the speaker. If the company be unresponsive it may perish there and then ; but if itching ears are listening then its wayward flight has begun. The inveterate gossip is as impatient as the boy with the new toy in his eagerness to hand on the latest tale. Then are its five lancets laid bare, and it never alights without stabbing afresh its victim. Sometimes its wings are even thinner than words, a look, a laugh will suffice to waft the lie onward. Swift puts it thus :

“Convey a libel in a frown,
And wink a reputation down !”

The persistency of the mosquito suggests another resemblance. Like “soft buzzing slander” it defies all attempts at destruction. Two Irish emigrants on arriving in Canada

found themselves pestered by the attentions of this insect. In vain they hid themselves below the bed-clothes, the fatal buzz still haunted them. At last, one putting his head out and catching sight of a fire-fly remarked in despair, "Och what's the use, the cratur's searchin' for us wid a lantern."

So is it with a lie. Mosquito-like it defies all denials; and when one thought that it was dead its buzz is heard again. Thus in the life of this insect we have a splendid example of the lie illustrated, until we might almost address falsehood in the sarcastic words which Bryant applies to the mosquito :

"Fair insect that with threadlike legs spread out,
And blood-extracting bill and filmy wing,
Dost murmur, as thou slowly sail'st about,
In pitiless ears full many a plaintive thing,
And tell how little our large veins would bleed,
Would we but yield them to thy bitter need."

XX

THE MOLLUSCA

HERE in a corner of this house we come on three little creatures, which are not really insects, but only their second cousins. These are the worm, the spider, and the shell inhabitant.

As this latter creature is best known by its house which it leaves lying about on our shores and fields, I think that we will follow the example of little Margaret, who picked one up and placed it to her ear.

"Oh, father, the shell is talking," she exclaimed: for she heard a dull murmur as of a thousand voices whispering, and her bright face was full of wonder.

"What is it saying?" asked her father, with a smile, as he took her free hand, and led her along the beach to a big rock where there was room for them to sit.

"Oh, such lots of things; but I can't make them out."

"Well, if you will listen, I will tell you."

Margaret kept the shell still at her ear, and

imagined that her father's words came from it. He pretended too, that it was the shell which spoke.

"You hear in me, little Margaret," he began, "the echo of a great many voices, for I have the knack of catching and keeping all the sounds within my reach, and then giving them out again like the big instrument with the trumpet that you heard at the children's concert. There are so many, that is why the sound is so confused. But by the help of your father, you will hear each of them speak separately.

"You kicked me just now with your foot as if I was a worthless, broken thing. I suppose you thought me good for nothing ; but I have done a great many duties in my life, and I only hope you will be as useful.

"First, I was employed as a *drinking cup*. A long, long time ago—in fact, four hundred and thirty years before Christ—the people in Scotland had to use me for drinking out of. They had no nice china then, and were very glad to find a good shell. Many a drink I have given to those who were thirsty, and I am sure the water was just as refreshing as if it had come out of a beautiful glass tumbler. You see we can be very helpful though we do not wear fine clothes. A kind word sounds just as sweet from

the lips of a poor man as from those of a rich. There are a lot of people round you, Margaret, who have a heart thirst ; and perhaps you think it is only the minister, or the doctor, or the Sabbath-school teacher, or the person who has money who can help them. God has given you a bright face and a happy heart : why, do you think ? Just that you may play the part of the little shell and refresh the sad.

“ But also I have been a *token of friendship*. Ossian, the old bard of the Highlands, will tell you about that. In the days of long ago, when a chief was in need of help, he went to a neighbouring clan, carrying a blood-stained shield in one hand and a broken spear in the other. These were signs that he was in distress and required assistance. If his request was agreed to, he was handed a shell as a pledge of friendship. You can imagine how welcome I was. The chief did not throw me away, but kept me as his greatest treasure, because I was a token to him of help and deliverance.

“ Now, Margaret, you are very like that chief. There is a big red stain of sin in your heart, and the lie you told the other day broke your spear of truth, and you need the help of a Friend and Deliverer. If you will read your Bible, you will find in its pages lots of promises that, like

the shells, are pledges of Christ's assistance. Take, for instance, that verse in Peter: 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.'

"In those days, too, I did many other things for the poor people. Just think, I was their *lamp*. You have gas and electricity, but they had only me to light their homes with. Are you always grateful to God for having been born in such a pleasant age? They filled me with oil taken from the cod-fish, and then placed a wick in it, and hung me up in their room; and when it was dark they gathered around me, and I gave them light. You perhaps would laugh at me to-day, but I did my best. That is what I want you to do. There is a great deal of gloom in this world, but Christ is willing to put the oil of joy into your heart, and it will light up your face, and then you will bring gladness to others.

"There was another duty of which I was very proud: I was used as an *ornament*. My little brother the scallop-shell perhaps became the most famous in that way. It was worn by the pilgrims who went to the Holy Land, and became a badge for brave knights, and was carried by the palmers, the men who spent their lives in travelling from shrine to shrine. So that when people saw it, they knew that the

wearer was trying to live a saintly life. Will you carry the little shell of love in your soul, so that all may see that you, too, are a pilgrim journeying to the 'Heavenly Land?'

"Then there are a number of little shells that dwell far out upon the ocean, but are often thrown up by the sea on the Irish shore. They were found in the days of the Old Testament on the sands of Palestine, and out of the tint of their shells was made a beautiful blue *dye*. It was used in adorning the Tabernacle, and it even coloured the lace that bound the high priest's breastplate. I have not time to tell you of the varied ways it was used in the service of God. Like it were the shells out of which the Tyrian dye was got. Only one tiny drop came from each shell, so that it was very costly, and it was put to very sacred use. The purple in the Temple of Solomon was coloured by it. What an honour to help to make God's house beautiful! Remember, however, what pleases Him best is not rich ornaments, but pure, true souls; these are what make His Church really lovely. Will you not help in trying to adorn it?

"Then you have heard that the pearls you admire come from the shells. They say that a small grain of sand gets inside and causes the little creature pain. You know how sore it is

to get dust in your eye, and how it waters ; so the animal that lives inside the shell lets a drop—we will call it a tear—cover the grain, and in time it hardens into the precious pearl. So you can transform the griefs and trials of your life into shining proofs of faith and courage.

“ And now before I stop I must tell you one thing about yourself. I gave you your name. Margaret is from the Greek word for pearl. It is nice to be called after what is so lovely ; but I hope people will call you that just for your very own sake, and that you will shine like a pearl in your home.”

“ What a lot the shell has told me, father, Who would have thought it could have been so useful,” said Margaret, looking up with a smile.

“ Yes, it sets you an example my little girl, which I trust you will never forget,” he replied, as he led her homewards.”

XXI

THE SPIDER

WHAT is to be for dinner? " is the pressing question which faces the spider as well as the housewife, and the way he answers it is full of suggestive hints to all who have to solve the same problem. "If he will not work neither shall he eat" is a Bible maxim which applies especially to the spider. Before even he may permit himself to think of dinner he must start to his task of manufacturing silk and weaving his web.

Let us make a morning call on Mistress Spider. There is no use asking for her husband, as he does not count, and the question might be inconvenient. This is certainly so when times are hard, for the relationship between the two becomes rather strained. Any food that is going never comes his way. This must be his only excuse for the shocking act to which hunger tempts him. When his wife's back is turned he makes a hurried visit to the nursery; and when, a moment later, the mother returns and

counts her offspring and finds one missing, he tries to look innocent! She says nothing, but waits her time. If no flies are caught, his prospects look black; but before he gets too thin she rises up and crunches him between her teeth. This is all very terrible, but then this creature is the greatest monster alive. Lions cannot equal it for pure lust of blood and sheer ferocity. Armed with the jaws of a tiger, the talons of an eagle, the poison-fangs of a serpent, and equipped with eight eyes, she is the kind of creature one dreams of in a nightmare.

The Workshop

We will inspect, first of all, the workshop. One might call it the slaughter-house. Mary Howitt gives it a more polite name, when she says—

“ ‘ Will you walk into my parlour ? ’

Said a spider to a fly ;

‘ ’Tis the prettiest little parlour

That ever you did spy.’ ”

That is certainly true of the garden spider, who excels in the weaving of her web. The common house spider is not so particular, and apparently has not studied geometry, for she

strings together a multitude of threads without much attention to pattern. This may do all very well for dark corners, but it will not stand the light of day. There one thread too many would act as a warning to the fly, while one too few would lessen the chance of capture. Hence the garden spider has devised the circular net, so simple and yet so perfect. Every step in her building is suggestive.

One word about the material she uses, the wonderful thread which she spins. In the lower part of her body she has six little spinning machines hard at work, and again in each of these there are numerous smaller ones called spinnerets. In some there are four hundred. Each gives off a slender thread, and quickly these are blended into one single cord. This is manufactured as quickly as it is required, and one scientist actually drew out from a spider about four thousand yards' length of thread without a break. Busy little creature! Even when the four hundred plies are all blended into one, the thread is still so thin that it is used by opticians for marking on the field of a telescope the smallest fraction of an inch. Before putting into use the spider tests its strength by giving it a little pull. Such is the material with which she builds, and it is all her own manufacture.

She puts, in fact, her vital strength into her net. That is what we must do in the making of life's web if it is to fulfil its purpose. Yet how many need this lesson ! They will give anything but their own selves to Christ.

The spider studies the wind and watches for its chance. When a suitable breath comes, she lets her thread go and be carried into the air until it alights on some bush. Its end has been already furnished with a soft gum that glues it to the object on which it rests. Making quite sure that it is firmly fastened, she runs along it, spinning another thread ; and if she considers the place a likely one for future business, she begins at once the erection of her workshop. Learn from this to watch your chance.

Before the real building begins a scaffolding is erected, and soon within that framework the circle of quivering threads is quickly formed. The principal ones are coated with a sticky fluid, and when complete the spider gives them a tug that shakes the glue into tiny drops. It is these which first grip the feet of the thoughtless fly, and thus entrap it in the snare. But the clever builder leaves here and there a thread which has no gum for her own private use, in order that she may hurry out the faster to seize her victim. When the work is complete, she

cuts away all the useless scaffolding, and leaves only the destructive web. What impresses one about *human* life is that men make so much of the scaffolding and so little of the real structure. After all, we are not here to get rich, not to become learned, not to enjoy selfish pleasures, but to build the temple of God ; and as yet we can hardly see its rising walls for the maze of earthly scaffolding, which some day will be swept away as useless. Imitate the spider, and look upon money, time, learning, as but means for the advancing of Christ's work, and then there will be no useless scaffolding in your life to mar its beauty.

The Home

The spider's home adjoins the workshop, only it is out of sight. Necessity has taught this wise creature that the best work can only be done when self is hidden. If the spider were to stand in the centre of her beautiful web admiring her own work, she would have to go without dinner ; for no flies of any consequence would venture near. But she has a telegraph communication laid between her shop and her den. This is a little thread that is attached to all the cords at the centre of the circle; and is

led into the house. On this she has always one hand resting, so that should a fly touch but the farthest rim of her web she knows at once of its presence.

“The spider’s touch, how exquisitely fine !
Feels at each thread and lives along the line.”

The sensitiveness of the spider was once the cause of a great battle and victory for the French. It was during a war with Holland ; and a French prisoner who had nothing to do but watch the spiders in his cell, noticed that they showed the usual signs of the approach of frost. He managed to send word to his general that the land which was covered with water, and across which the troops could not march, would soon be frozen, and they would be able to walk over the ice-bridged swamps. The prophecy of the spiders came true, and the French general instead of retreating waited for the frost, and then advanced to victory. If only we were as quick to detect sin in our lives or to feel the presence of Christ, how much more useful would we not become, and what conquests might we not win !

The spider has so much to tell us that we must really pay it a second visit.

The Larder

We must just take a peep into the larder. It is the saddest sight of all. There lies a big moth, not dead, but so completely tied hand and foot that it cannot move, and it must just wait until the cruel spider comes to suck its blood. A few minutes ago it was flying gaily in the air, but it came too near that white lie of a web, Its wing touched the sticky bead-drop of gum and became fastened. Before it could free itself the spider had darted from her lair, and quickly drew some of her silky cords round its feet. At last its wings were free, but that fatal thread held it tethered. It managed to flutter away a few inches, but gradually the spider wound in that string and brought it nearer. Then its captor succeeded in passing a line round its body, and pulling its wings in so tightly that they could not move. The rest was easy: a silken net was soon spun all around it, and now it lies a helpless captive.

That is how sin entraps the soul. The first temptation seems almost innocent, but that is the fastening of the thread. Slowly but surely sin gains its hold, until the one who has yielded becomes its helpless victim. How dreadful a fate! How watchful we should be of those

silken webs of selfishness and pleasure which entrap the unwary! If already caught, let us ask Christ at once to break those bonds and set us free.

The Submarine Palace

We all know about building castles in the air; but who ever heard of palaces under the sea? Yet surely there never was a mansion more strange or beautiful than the one which the water-spider constructs of air at the bottom of a lake. It has been left for this clever little creature to show us how we may have flourishing cities beneath the waves. She breathes as we do, and would die unless she had a constant supply of fresh air. How does she manage, then, to spend almost her whole life submerged?

Unlike the diver, she has no tube or communication cord reaching to the surface. Such an encumbrance would make life a burden; for in order to catch her prey she must lie patiently for hours concealed behind some stone or weed. She has hit on a far better plan, and creates a little atmosphere of her own away down in the depths. For travelling purposes she manages to carry a little bubble of air with

her, which she draws on for the purposes of breathing. The way she takes captive this bubble is most ingenious. There is always a thin film on the surface, and the spider has learned to make use of this fact. Her front is covered with fine close hairs, and as she sinks suddenly she manages by straightening out these to keep back the skin on the water from closing in too quickly, with the consequence that before she is submerged she has taken prisoner a handful of air. This she holds on to and sucks, just as a baby does a bottle. When this is exhausted she rises to the surface for another supply.

However, she is not content with one bubble ; as she has chosen to live in such a strange place, she sets about the building of an air house. First of all she spins a framework of threads. The air would rise to the surface if not held down. So she ties together the stalks of some weeds into an arch and by multiplying these soon forms an artificial dome. Then she hurries to the surface, and carries bubble after bubble down to her retreat, and just as a mason might lay in his stones so she builds up her air palace. At last it is finished, and here she has a home actually dry ; for no rain can fall there, not a drop of water can break through the surface

film that forms all round her mansion, the floor alone is damp. In size it is about as big as a large walnut, and it is encased in a silken invisible net, and it looks just like a beautiful crystal palace under the sea.

Now if the spider allowed her air supply to run short, and did not take the trouble to get more, what would happen? Why, she would be drowned, of course. So is it with the human soul. God made us to be heaven-breathing beings. This world was not intended to be our real home; yet while here we may surround ourselves by a spiritual atmosphere which will keep our souls alive. This comes from above, and is the Spirit of God.

The Aeroplane

The spider was I think the first creature to invent the aeroplane. It was one of the tiniest members of the family that achieved this success. This spider has a craze for travelling. Once a year she migrates. She wants to see more of the world than is around her own doorstep. Nor is she content with crawling a few yards, that is all the length her feet could carry her. She aspires to a tour of a hundred miles. But how is she to accomplish this? Though she may

envy the birds, yet she has no wings. It must be ages ago since this problem set the tiny brain a-thinking, and then some fortunate individual must have hit on the idea of the aeroplane. Instead of wishing vainly for what was beyond her reach, she determined to make use of the one material which she had to hand—her silky web. She discovered that it was so light that the gentlest breeze would waft it over the fields. So one morning, when the craze for travel was on her and the wind was from the right direction, she made her little aeroplane of silk, and then getting on board, she cut herself adrift, and let go the last thread which held the web to the branch of the home bush. In a moment she was carried high into the air. What a glorious sensation it was, to be swept along over fields and houses! As she held on tightly and rode on the breeze I am quite sure that she murmured to herself "Now life is worth the living!" No wonder that thousands soon followed her example, and every year we may see their flight,

"Sailing 'mid the golden air
In skiffs of yielding gossamer."

Faith is the soul's aeroplane. The man without it is tethered to the earth, but borne on

its upward flight we may be carried like the spider far above the reach of troubles and trials into regions of glory.

The Wardrobe

The spider, though perhaps you would not think it, is very fond of dress. She likes a new one every season, and is content with nothing less than a complete outfit. Look, she is hanging there by her feet to a thread. Suddenly a strange thing happens, she drops out of her skin : in fact, for a moment you think that she has become two spiders. The lower one looks brand-new, while the other seems rather faded in comparison. But when you examine the top spider, though all its legs and feelers are there, you are amazed to discover that it is only an empty shell. She has thrown off every bit of her old dress. Now that is what we ought to do with all our bad habits. We should cast them like the spider, and not be content with just making little changes. We go in for too much patchwork in human character. If we mean to get rid of an evil practice, let us be done with it once and for all. You like to get a new dress, I know. Why not have one for the soul

as well as the body? Ask God, and He will
give you,

“A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true, and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From Him that dwells within.”

XXII

THE WORM

THE next time I meet a boy who is afflicted with the skipping-work disease, and who is always ready with the words, "I can't!" I am going to introduce him to the humble worm, who will soon shame him into spirit. Just look at this little fellow. He has got everything against him. To start with he is deaf and dumb and blind. I was going to say that he was lame; but he is really worse than that for he has no feet at all, and has to get on as best he can without them, "Poor chap!" you say, "he is fit only for a hospital." But instead it is his lot to get more kicks than kindness. Everybody seems to be his enemy. If he puts his head above ground to get a little fresh air and find how the big world is going on there is always the "early" bird about to gobble him up; or if there is not a bird just at hand, there is possibly a boy with a fishing rod on the outlook for bait, and as far as the worm is concerned the result is the same. Even in its house it is not

safe. Moles and slugs hunt them like ferrets. There is also a kind of small fly that loves to lay its eggs in the soft skin of the worm ; not having any hands with which to rub these off, the poor creature has just to endure the pain in silence. It is this suffering that makes the worm try the fresh air cure, and brings it to the surface. Most of those that you see crawling over the roads and paths are afflicted with this trouble. They are trying a change of scenery, but it is no good. Their doctors have not yet discovered a remedy for the fatal egg-wound of the fly. So the next time that you want bait take the worms which have come out of their holes really to die. Healthy ones seldom leave their burrows, except perhaps after very heavy rain.

So, you see, things are not easy for the poor worm. Yet it does not despair. A man with such a poor chance would not only grumble but lose all heart. Yet, if there is one thing which the worm has got, it is spirit. Not the kind of spirit which gets into a temper and hits back ; but the patient, persevering spirit, which masters difficulties and successfully accomplishes its work in the face of terrible odds. I believe that God has made the worm to preach men this sermon.

I. The work of the worm teaches us our first

truth. It goes in for hard manual labour. By digging its little tunnels into the earth it throws up heaps of soft soil. Much of this has passed actually through the worm so that all the stones are removed and it is finely sifted. These castings greatly improve the quality of the ground and fit it better for growing crops. It is calculated that in an acre of land these busy labourers will dig out and sift in a year over nineteen tons weight of soil. Every ounce of that mass has been ground into powdery dust. But that is only half of its task. This active creature drags away down through its long tunnels heaps of leaves and rotten things. These decay and enrich the soil. You have seen a gardener making a compost heap, he piles all the refuse in a corner, and then when it has become thoroughly decomposed he spreads it on his plots. The worm, however, is cleverer, it does the two things at once, it makes its compost heap not on the surface but away down underground where it will be of most use.

But more than all that is the service which it has rendered in making our valleys and hillsides so fertile. When you look at the dotted farms along some strath or the green slopes where the sheep are browsing have you ever thought of

the debt you owe the worm for these? Or when you are having your tea do you remember that the worm by its silent activity has helped to provide you with your very bread?

You see, it is like this: the worm throws up a little heap of soil at the mouth of its home. We will suppose that some are working on the top of a stoney mountain. It is marvellous through what a hard substance they will pierce their way. Their burrows expose the bed-rock to the influence of acids which melt it, and they send to the top, like miners to the mouth of a pit, bits of the rock which they have ground into sand. Thus the pile of earth increases; and then the wind comes and blows it away down into the valley, where it forms layer upon layer of soft rich soil. Or it may be, that some ridge has caught this drift of light earth, and gathers it on the hillside, and thus changes the bare slopes into green pastures. "Bravo! little worker," you say. "What spirit to accomplish so much against such odds!"

But I have not told all yet. Not only are we indebted to the worm for much of our food, but even for our knowledge. It has been one of the world's best historians. You see, away down underground it has kept a museum of

its own, and has laid by there a marvellous collection of things which tell us a great deal about the past. It has buried for us old coins and interesting relics which would never have been preserved had it not been for its labour.

Now, how has it accomplished all this? By silent, modest, persevering toil, and there we have the true secret of all success. So much of its task is underground, unseen by man, yet it does it faithfully. I want you to imitate the worm in this. And by changing hard tempers into soft ones, angry words into kind ones, you will be able to make the bare places of life more beautiful, and to make the wilderness to blossom as the rose.

2. The watchfulness of the worm suggests another lesson. Without eyes or ears how can it guard itself against its foes? "They shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth," says Micah. How does a worm move out? It rests its head for a moment flat on the ground. It is not listening, but it is feeling. That one sense is very acute. The slightest tremor from a passing footstep is noted, and at once the body is drawn back. The one safeguard of the worm is in its tail. Have you ever noticed it? Towards the end it is broad and flat. What

is the purpose of that ? Well, a wise worm never draws its tail completely out of its burrow. With this end it takes a firm grip of the sides of its home, and at the slightest alarm its body shoots back into shelter like a stretched elastic. There we have a splendid example for the Christian. He ought to have his heart clinging so firmly to Christ, that the moment sin threatens it will pull him back to the Saviour's side, where alone he will be safe.

3. The wounds of the worm bring a message of hope. Was there ever a creature more maltreated than the worm. The spade of the digger, the hook of the angler, the beak of the bird, all tear and pierce it, and, poor creature, it cannot even strike back, is perhaps what we think in pity. But just here we see the goodness of God in the compensations which He gives to the helpless. It has something more helpful even than a sting. The bee in comparison may seem better equipped, but when attacked it plunges its sting into the offender and then dies. The worm does not retaliate, it bears patiently its pain, and the Creator has given it a marvellous power of recovery. You may cut a worm in half, but instead of killing it you have really only increased it ; for both parts quickly heal and become separate worms. Which then is

the greater gift, health or the power to hurt? In the end the worm has the best of it. Remember then that weakness has its compensations, that patience in suffering brings its own blessing, and that the health of the soul is worth more than the wealth of the world.

III

THE LION'S HOUSE

**"Wouldst thou view the lion's den ?
Search afar from haunts of men,
Where the reed-encircled rill,
Oozes from the rocky hill,
By its verdure far descried
'Mid the desert brown and wide."**

XXIII

THE LION

ONE or two iron bars make all the difference as to whether we fear or admire the lion most. When we look at his shaggy mane and sinewy limbs inside a cage, we say, "What a noble animal!" But if its door were accidentally to open, we would run and scream in terror. Now the lions in the Bible are not of the caged type, but the kind that a man meets suddenly prowling round in the field. There were plenty of them in those days, therefore we need not be surprised if they are spoken of in tones of dread rather than praise. I am going to tell you about four sorts of lions that the Scriptures refer to.

I. *The strong lion.* Solomon says, "A lion is the strongest among beasts." With a single blow of his paw he can kill a man or a wolf. Sometimes the world sneers at Christians and calls them soft, yet is it not a fact that we cannot somehow even mention lions without also thinking of Christians? Why? Because they faced them unarmed and unafraid. The world

has no greater monument to the courage of the saint than the Colosseum in Rome. It is the sinner who is the coward. Who could be braver than David? "There came a lion and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went after him and smote him," is the simple way in which he tells the story of his fight with this wild animal. It was his faith in God which made him brave, and that is what will make you a hero too. But perhaps you say that David had trained muscles, and therefore it was much easier for him to attack the lion than it would be for you. Well, I will tell you about another person who was a weaker man than David, though perhaps not a weaker Christian, and you will see how he escaped from this savage creature. His name is Sir John Gayor. He lived two hundred and fifty years ago, and he left a sum of money that every year in October a sermon on lions might be preached in the Church of Saint Catherine Cree, Leadenhall Street, London. He was travelling once in Arabia, and was alone, unarmed, in the desert, when a lion met him. There was no escape, and he was not a David; but he was a Daniel. He believed in the power of prayer: he carried in his heart a more effective weapon than a gun. So as the lion came towards him he just knelt down and asked God to deliver

him. The beast sniffed all round him, and then walked calmly away. It was to keep in mind this deliverance that he left the money for the annual sermon.

So, you see, although the lion is very strong there is something stronger, and that is faith in God. The lions you meet in life may not have manes and flashing eyes and waving tails, but they may be as cruel, as powerful ; so get ready at once to meet them by having this weapon of prayer sharp and handy. Remember that verse in Revelation, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed." Who is that ? It is Christ. He is the King of men. Sin is crushed beneath Him as the victim beneath the paw of the lion. The Bible, therefore, makes every lion a preacher of Jesus : it tells us of His might, and thrills us with confidence, for we know that "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

2. *The savage lion.* You have seen a picture of the lion standing over his prey. His lips are dripping with blood, his eyes are glaring, and his great tail swinging with anger : who could look more savage ? The Bible uses that as a picture of malice. In Psalm vii. 2 we read, "lest he tear my soul like a lion." How very terrible ! And yet boys and girls sometimes act

like that. Whenever out of spite they say what is untrue about another, they are, as it were, fastening cruel claws into his character and trying to rend it. What a blessing to the world if all such lions could be caged !

The savage lion paints us still another picture. You remember that verse in Peter : " The devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour." How people would run to help if they saw a man in the grip of a lion ! Rifles would be snatched, and before many minutes the beast would fall dead with a bullet in its heart. Well, every day you may see that sight. Only because the lion is Satan, and more relentless than any animal of the forest, people somehow do not seem to mind. Look at that poor fellow reeling down the street, all tattered and torn : he is under the paw of this fierce tyrant. See that woman ; she may be dressed in silks, but the passion for whispering slander has enslaved her ; the world calls her a gossip or busybody. Poor creature ! she is really in the clutches of this savage lion. Now, boys and girls, this is the beast I want you to fight. You will find him in your path every day ; show him no mercy, for he has none. As the best side of the lion gives us a picture of Christ, so its worst side reveals to us Satan.

3. *The stealthy lion.* You have watched a cat trying to catch a mouse. How quiet and crafty it is! Now the lion has something of the same instinct. It will crouch and wait secretly for its prey, and then pounce out upon it with a sudden spring. So the Bible tells us is the wicked man: "He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den to catch the poor." Sometimes at the gate of a field you see the sign, "Beware of the bull"; were it to read instead, "Look out for the lion," I am pretty sure every one would give that spot a rather wide berth. Now that is the warning that the Bible nails over the house of the evil companion. Your parents, perhaps, have told you not to go with that bad boy, and yet you disobey; you are as foolish as the senseless man who would deliberately go into the field that had such a notice at its gate.

4. *The subdued lion.* "Thou shalt tread upon the lion," sings the Psalmist. "The lion shall eat straw like the ox," is how Isaiah pictures that future day when the Prince of Peace shall reign over all the earth. Even the lion has a tender spot in its fierce heart, and can be tamed.

Once a number of rough men were looking at a caged lion, when one of them in cruel sport picked up his little dog and forced it through

the bars. The poor creature was terrified, and ran whimpering to the farthest corner of the cage and coiled itself up there, quivering, while the brutal men looked on in amusement to see what the lion would do. It did not rise, but gazed quietly at the intruder. The minutes passed, and the little doggie seemed to gain hope, for it crawled with its ears down and tail between its legs towards the huge beast. To the surprise of all, the lion, instead of snapping, reached out its tongue and began affectionately to lick the frightened creature. When the men's wonder was satisfied, the owner of the dog approached the lion-tamer and asked to get it back again.

"As you put it into the cage yourself, you had better just go and get it out," was the retort.

The man whistled, but the dog only snuggled the closer to its new master. Then, thinking that he might reach its foot and draw it back, he stretched in his hand. In a moment the lion was on his feet, and his roar resounded through the building, and the men, terrified, fled from the place, and as long as the lion lived he never allowed the dog to be taken from him.

So you see how the heart of this beast can be subdued. The picture the prophet paints is not

beyond belief. Will you not help to hasten on that happy day when the peace of Christ shall pervade the world, and the passions of the wicked shall be quelled, and the old words become true, " They shall not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain " ?

XXIV

THE BEAR

LET me tell you about three kinds of bears mentioned in the Bible.

1. *The bear that robs.* The bear, I fear, has got a very bad character. He is a big thief. In Samuel we read how a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock. On that occasion he stole once too often, for you remember that David, though unarmed, caught him and killed him. To-day he is just as thieving a beast as ever. He will climb the trees and steal the hard-earned honey from the bees, and will walk off with a stray sheep wherever he can find it. Sometimes this evil habit proves his ruin. In Russia, when the people know that a bear is prowling about, they fill a tub with "vodka," that is their whisky. Bruin smells the strong odour, and comes sniffing along. He thinks he has discovered a great find, and drinks heartily, and then he begins to reel and stagger like a drunken man, and becomes quite helpless. Chains are then passed round his body

and a muzzle adjusted, after which he is led in triumph through the village. "Poor silly bear!" you say. Yet after all he is only like thousands of human beings who are caught in Satan's trap of drink.

Once a baby bear started off from its den with its mother. Away down the mountain it came. At last the mother stopped. In front of her was a big piece of meat on a stick. It looked very tempting, yet she could sniff the human scent, and that made her cautious; for the bear is always suspicious of man. But the meat looked nice and juicy, and the longer she kept her eyes on it the more her mouth watered: it would do no harm, she thought, merely to lick it. How sweet it tasted! The moment she touched it, she felt she must have it at all risks. So she began to pull it off the pole. She pulled and pulled, when all of a sudden down came a big beam which she had never noticed; it felled her to the ground, and killed her on the spot, crushing her body under its huge weight. When the trappers came next morning, they found the baby bear sitting by its mother, wondering that she never moved. They caught it and took it away to a menagerie. It was trained to do a lot of tricks, and got fond of its keepers. But one day they happened to

come to a town near its old home. The bear somehow seemed to know. It got restless, and, to the surprise of all, it broke away. On and on it ran towards the mountains, until it came to the very den from which it had started five years before. It was very happy to be home again, and for months it roamed about enjoying its liberty. Then it began to remember the nuts and nice things it had got from its trainers. This craving grew so strong that one day it started back to find its friends. It struck the scent of some trappers, and came trotting gladly into their encampment ; for it thought the men would pet and feed it. You may be sure they jumped up quick enough when they saw it running towards them. One seized a rifle and shot it dead. It was then that they discovered on the collar round its neck its name, and knew that this was the bear which had escaped some months before.

Now that is just how boys and girls are caught in the trap of sin. The temptation looks so pleasant. They say there is no harm in doing what is bad just for once. Then the trap closes on them. Satan has caught them. Perhaps, like the bear, they manage to break away. They escape, and resolve to turn a new leaf, and then the thought of the old sinful delight

comes back. They cannot resist it; they return to their evil ways, and the end is death.

2. *The bear that was robbed.* There is a curious verse in Prov. xvii. 12: "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly." I suppose if you got your chance you would rather meet the fool; but the Bible is right, there is more mercy and kindness even in an enraged bear than in a fool.

An unarmed trapper once met a bear. He thought it would run away from him, but it had been robbed of its young and was furious. Instead, it charged him. He took to his heels as fast as he could. There was a frozen river in front, and though the ice was beginning to break up yet it was the only way. The bear followed him hard as he fled across it. Then suddenly there was a sound like thunder. Bear and man stopped. They knew what it was: the ice had broken away, and was being swept down the river, to be hurled over the falls a mile below. The man got on one piece of floating ice, the bear on another. Down they were swirled by the rushing current. A rock stood in the track of the stream. The man tried to shove his way towards it. As he was being carried past, he caught it, and leapt on to the

stone. Then he turned to watch the bear. It realised its danger, and knew that the rock was its only safety. When it saw that the cake of ice on which it was would be drifted away, and over the falls, it sprang into the river some yards above the rock, and swam so that it might be carried towards it. It would, however, have been swept past had not the trapper, who admired its skill, bent down and caught its neck, and pulled it till its feet gripped the rock. For an hour both bear and man sat there together ; but even the bear robbed of its whelps had a sense of gratitude, it never touched the defenceless man. Then the ice jammed into a kind of dam. It might only hold for a few moments before it would break away, but the man knew that it was his only chance to reach the shore. He sprang on to the ice and ran along it, while the bear, recognising that the man knew best, followed at his heels. No sooner had they gained the land than the ice gave way ; both stood for a moment watching the big blocks being hurled over the falls, then the bear trotted away into the woods. Yes, even an enraged bear has a soft spot in his heart ; but what about the fool ? I take this to mean the person who is so conceited, so proud of his own wisdom, that he will not listen to reason. Well, I think that

Solomon was right : one may make more of a bear than a person like that.

3. *The bear that rends.* The story in Second Kings is a sad one. Forty-two children torn in pieces by bears is a cruel sight. Perhaps some one says that God is surely hard-hearted to permit such suffering. Well, the children had been very bad, and not only they but their parents. They never would have made fun of God's prophet unless the older people had taught them disrespect. After all, it was harder for the fathers and mothers, and I believe they were the real sinners. It is in mercy that God punishes a people. He sends earthquakes and storms, and hundreds perhaps of innocent people even may suffer, but this is often the only way that men can be warned. If there were no troubles or trials—and these are God's bears that rend us—why, we would never want to think of heaven ; we would always wish just to live on earth. But the Bible teaches us that life is a pilgrimage. Sometimes the path leads through the dark forest glades, where the bears of sorrow prowl ; but if we have Christ for our Guide we need fear no foe, for He will always prove Himself to be our Refuge and Strength.

XXV

THE LEOPARD

THERE are no tigers mentioned in the Bible, but their second-cousin the leopard represents the family. You see tigers have stripes on their backs, and that shows us that the jungle is their natural home. As they lie amongst the long rope-like creepers the markings on their skins are so like the shadows cast by the thicket that they are not easily seen.

The leopard has, however, spots instead of stripes, and we look for him, therefore, where the trees are leafy ; for it is under such that he finds his surest hiding-place. Crouching there it is very difficult to distinguish him from his surroundings.

1. The Bible speaks of the leopard's *spots*. You remember the verse—"Can a leopard change its spots?" A French paper told an amusing story some time ago. A French menagerie was visiting Moscow. Its owner could not speak Russian, but by the aid of signs he arranged with a native workman to

clean out the cages. In order to show him the way, he took a bucket and a sponge and entering a cage where some harmless animals were, began to wash it out. A young antelope was there, and by way of giving it a treat he rubbed its back with the wet sponge. Then he left the man to continue the work. Imagine his horror and surprise on returning a little later, to see the Russian in a leopard's cage, endeavouring in vain to rub out the black spots. The soothing attention pleased the brute, and he stretched out his limbs to be sponged ; but all the water in the world could never take out the marks upon his skin.

Now the Bible says that sin makes spots just as black upon the soul. The Pharisees thought that by attending to the outward rites of religion they could keep their hearts free from sin. They were just as foolish as the ignorant Russian who scrubbed the leopard. How careful we should be, then, not to let an evil thought or word or deed blacken our souls, for all that we ourselves can do is useless to remove those guilty marks. Can nothing, then, take them out? Yes, there is just one thing that can wash them away. You know the words: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

2. The leopard is noted for its *stealth*. It is like a very big cat, and you know how softly puss can creep along, and how patiently she will wait by a mouse's hole. Once a hunter chased a leopard. He saw it spring into a large leafy tree, and though he and his men searched the branches they could find no trace of it, so at last they concluded that it must have escaped. As it was getting dark they decided to encamp where they were ; so fires were lit and the meal was cooked. Then they all lay down to sleep. About midnight the hunter thought he heard a rustling in the leaves above his head, but before he could rise and seize his gun he saw the leopard leap from the very tree into which he had been chased. The beast sprang at a dog that was lying sleeping near the fire, and catching it in his mouth, cleared with a leap the circle of men, and disappeared with its prey into the forest.

“ A leopard shall watch over their cities,” is how Jeremiah pictures the vengeance that falls on guilty men. There are youths who in the glow of health and strength perhaps laugh at the consequences of sin. They forget that their evil deeds are watching them like the stealthy leopard, and some day, when they least suspect, their sin will spring out upon them, and make them its victims. “ Therefore be ye also ready ;

for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

3. The leopard is known for its *savagery*. It kills from a lust for blood. Other wild animals will only destroy life when they are hungry, but the leopard slays because it delights in it. The lion betrays a certain nobility even in its greed, but the leopard will stoop to rob a hen-roost, and once it gets a taste of blood it will dare anything to secure its victim.

One night a leopard sprang over the wall of an Eastern village and killed a goat ; but before it could carry it off, an Englishman who was in a house rushed out with his rifle and fired a shot that wounded the brute and made it take to flight. He then for security took the dead goat into his bedroom. A few hours later he was disturbed by a stealthy movement in his room. Starting up, he saw that the leopard had actually entered, and was dragging its prey away. As his weapon was not within reach, he had to allow the bold thief to secure its prize.

Perhaps it is owing to this character that in Revelation we have the spirit of Antichrist likened to a leopard. If so, it should put us on our guard. Sin is as stealthy, as savage, as determined. Satan wants to destroy the child's soul as much as the old man's. He

tries to creep in unseen, and once he has caught his victim he shows no mercy. "Who shall deliver me?" cries the apostle. Peter seems to answer that question in the words, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly." Find in Christ your refuge and your strength, and then you will be safe from all the wiles of the Evil One.

XXVI

THE WOLF

ONE day, according to a fable, a gaunt, hungry wolf met its second cousin, a well-fed dog. "How is it that you look so happy," he asked, "while I am nearly always starving?"

"I guard my master's house, and he gives me the best of food," was the answer. "Come home with me and share my kennel, and you will have plenty to eat."

So they trotted along together, when the wolf suddenly asked—

"What is that mark upon your neck?"

"Oh, a collar for my chain," the dog replied.

"Chain!" exclaimed the other. "Then you can go home alone! I would rather starve than be caressed on such conditions"; and so the wolf ran off to the wilds, and perhaps that is why he has become so fierce.

This animal was only too well known in Bible times, and as we turn its pages we find many references to it.

I. There is the *ravenous* wolf. In Ezek. xxii.

27 we read, " Her princes are like wolves ravening the prey." To understand what a terrible picture the prophet was painting of the nobles in Jerusalem, we must look at a pack of wolves. See it come over the ridge of the prairie hill in clear moonlight. A low dark shape it is, moving with deadly swiftmess. Their tongues are hanging out, and their eyes flash with green fire, as they follow the scent of a fleeting deer. Suddenly one gives a yelp: its leg has caught in a hole and got broken. In an instant the pack stop, not to help their fallen comrade—no! Their unwritten law is that the wounded is at once devoured. Their long white fangs snap, there is a short battle, and then the slain wolf is torn limb from limb.

What can be more savage than that? you ask. And yet Ezekiel says that the rulers in Jerusalem were as cruel. Surely we have here a picture of the long-suffering of God, that He should give those wicked men so many chances, and even at the last send His prophet to warn them of their coming ruin.

2. The *disguised* wolf is used by Christ to warn the people against the false prophets, "which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." That verse recalls another well-known fable.

Once, so the story goes, a wolf clothed itself in the skin of a sheep which it had killed, and thus was able to mix amongst the flock and to devour a great number unseen. One night the wolf as usual was shut up with the sheep when the owner came to kill one for his supper, and drove his knife into the heart of the wolf, thinking it was a sheep. So you see deceit in the end brings death. Though Christ has warned us; it is difficult always to detect the disguised wolf; but one thing we can do, and that is, never to act or speak a lie, or do what is underhand or mean under a false pretence.

3. The *merciless* wolf is another kind spoken of by Christ, when He said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Not much chance for the lamb, you would say. Yet Jesus only spoke the truth. Even these savage animals could not be more cruel than men were to His innocent saints and martyrs.

Another fable tells how a wolf met a lamb by the side of a brook.

"What do you mean," it said crossly, "by making the water so muddy that I cannot drink it?"

"I do not see how that can be," replied the lamb mildly, "as you are higher up the stream than I am."

"Anyhow, you were rude to me six months ago," snarled the wolf.

"Really, you must be mistaken," was the meek answer, "for I was not born then."

"Well, if it was not you, it must have been some of your family, and as I cannot catch them, I will punish you instead." So he tore the defenceless lamb to pieces.

Now, though that is only a story, it was the kind of argument used many a time against God's people who were tortured and burnt for their faith. I would just say this to you, boys : Never act the bully to those who are weaker than yourselves, or you will be likened to the wolf in this fable.

4. The *tamed* wolf is the last one I will mention. We read of a time when even these savage brutes will no longer kill or destroy. Isaiah says, "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together." Now, though this animal is so cruel, yet even it has a soft spot in its heart.

Twenty-five years ago a trapper near Winnipeg discovered a lair with nine cubs. He killed eight, and got the reward offered for each head ; but the ninth he sold to a saloon-keeper in the town, who chained it up in his back-yard. There it lived a miserable life, teased and kicked by the drunken men who came about the place,

who made sport of its captivity. Yet it had one pleasure. The barman had a son, six years old, called Jim. This little boy used to go into the kennel beside the wolf and pet and fondle it, until they became great friends. But the little fellow fell ill and died, and the day of his funeral the wolf broke loose and followed to the grave, where it howled piteously, and then started off into the woods. And whenever during the remaining three years of its life there was a funeral, and the bell of St Boniface tolled, there would come a weird echo from the woods—the howling of a wolf. Why did this animal remain there, exposed constantly to danger? Why did it not rush off to the wild prairies, where it would have liberty and safety? It looks as if it was attracted to the outskirts of that town by its love for little Jim.

Yes, even in the wildest animal I believe there is some tender spot; so that it is possible for us to believe in the truth of that promise, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb.”

XXVII

THE SERPENT

"OH, there is a snake, kill it!" is always the cry that greets this reptile. Like the shark, it need look for no mercy from man. Every day the old promise, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman," is being fulfilled. At the very sight of the stealthy coil stick or stone is seized at once and the wriggling creature crushed to death. There are three things of which the serpent in the Bible is a type.

I. *Sin*. "The serpent beguiled me," said Eve. That is always the way, the Tempter comes like a snake. He has the same power of fascination. Once a gentleman who was going through the woods saw a wild pigeon standing very erect and motionless on a branch. He was amazed that when he drew near it did not attempt to fly away. Though he made a noise it never even turned its head, but remained rigid. Then, when he came closer, he discovered with a start the cause. Quivering above the leaves of the opposite branch was the head of

a cobra, its cruel steely glance fixed on its victim at whom it was about to strike. With a swift blow of his cane the gentleman killed the snake, and even then the bird seemed dazed, frozen with fear. Only by degrees did it get back the power of its limbs and throw off that fatal fascination. So is it with sin. It deadens all spiritual impulse. The man who has allowed some temptation to get the mastery over him loses the power of resistance, he cannot even run away from it, prayer becomes almost impossible, and the sin like a huge cobra rises in its might and strikes with its deadly fangs.

Sin also resembles the serpent in its stealth. The scaly glitter amongst the leaves seems innocent enough, but once those coils have gripped their victim escape is impossible. In one of the galleries of the Vatican there is a group of statuary that awakens mixed feelings of admiration and horror, it is that of Laocoon and his two sons. There, in the throes of strangulation, the coils of a huge serpent entwining the arms and legs of those writhing men, they have petrified in marble a picture of death's sharpest agony. Thus does sin steal upon us. Too late men awaken to find that their past has made them prisoners. Take care, therefore,

boys and girls, not to give it a chance of getting its evil grip.

2. *Scourge.* "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people" is what we read in Numbers xxi. 6. Why did He do that? Because they had sinned. "The people spake against God and against Moses." Now, do not think that this old story is only about the Israelites, it is true to-day. On the track of every sin there follow the fiery serpents. The boy who has stolen a sixpence may think that he is having a fine time while he is spending it, but sooner or later the fiery serpent of remorse will give him a bite, and he will have no peace until he goes and confesses his theft.

Every sin becomes a fiery serpent, and though it may lie hidden for a while and be forgotten about, some day it will raise its head and strike home with its poisonous fangs. How would you like to live in a house filled with snakes? The very thought sends a shiver through you; yet the sinner inhabits such a dwelling. His heart is like the foul home of those venomous, wriggling creatures. How loathsome, how terrible! you say. What can keep the soul from becoming such a vile abode of evil? That question leads me to the third thought.

3. *Salvation.* The brazen serpent is an

emblem of the conquest of the Cross. As the sun flashes on its burnished scales one sees that it is stiff and harmless ; so does the Cross render powerless even the most vicious sin.

You remember the scene. The hosts of Israel had rebelled, when suddenly from crevices of the rock, from the pebbly sand dart venomous cobra and fasten their fangs on the undefended feet and hands of the terrified people. Lithe and stealthy, the serpents glide into the very tents, unseen, unheard, until their deadly prick announces a dreadful death. Out amongst the stricken crowds the leader of Israel goes and lifts on high the brazen serpent, and as the half-glazed eye of the dying victim rests upon its glittering scales, the tightened muscles relax, the swollen limbs unbend, the pallor of death yields to the flush of health, and he leaps to his feet unharmed and sound.

Christ alone can kill the serpent of sin : by His death upon the Cross He crushed its head. It is rather a strange thing that the heart of a snake is close to its head. When men want to destroy one they do not aim the blow at the tail but at the head. You might cut a snake in half and yet not kill it ; if deadly, it could still turn upon you and inflict its fatal wound. Yet men think that if they take a tiny bit off

the tail of sin they can destroy it ; and they often blame Christ and disbelieve in Him because He did not follow their example and begin with outward reforms. Christ struck at the head because He knew that the heart was there. Do the same ; smother the temptation while it is still a thought, and then your heart will never become the abode of those horrible serpents of sin.

IV

THE OUTSIDE PADDOCKS

"There is sorrow enough in the natural way
From men and women to fill our day ;
But when we are certain of sorrow in store,
Why do we always arrange for more ?
Brothers and sisters, I bid you beware
Of giving your heart to a dog to tear."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

XXVIII

THE DOG

CHRIST is the only one in the Scriptures who makes a kind reference to the dog. I think when He used those words, "The dogs came and licked his sores," a tenderness of tone must have betrayed His gratitude to those dumb creatures. The Bible is not to blame for this treatment of the dog, it but reflects the customs of the times. The people of the East needed Christ, and those who have His Spirit, to teach them the virtues of this trusty friend.

1. *Scorn* for the dog is the first truth we meet with in Scripture. "Am I a dog?" said Goliath in derision. "For dogs have compassed me," cried the Psalmist in his distress. Thus the dog in those days did not bear a very good character. But who was to blame? The poor half-starved cur that was neglected or kicked did not get a chance of showing its better nature. In Eastern towns these animals have a hard life, Their only home is the street, and every

mouthful of food has to be fought for with others as hungry as themselves. These constant battles leave deep wounds that soon fester into sores. There are no kindly hands to tend those hurts, and the dog grows up without knowing the meaning of a pat, a whistle, or an affectionate word. No wonder it is fierce and sly, and is spoken of with contempt. Yet, though man has denied it the opportunity for showing its higher gifts, its cleverness is often seen. In Constantinople the dogs have their unwritten laws, which all must obey. They are the scavengers of the city, and each tribe has its own separate district, across the boundaries of which it dare not trespass.

There are sheep-dogs in Palestine. We read of them in Job xxx. 1 : " Whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." But how different they are from our collies ! Half-starved and surly, they lag lazily behind the flock. This is the reason why the dog is spoken of with such contempt in the Bible. Had these people only bestowed kindness and care on these animals, how different the Eastern dog would have been to-day. Let us learn, therefore, to make the most of all God's gifts, and we will be rewarded in their greater usefulness.

2. The *service* of the dog. Jesus recognised that service, even in the licking of Lazarus' sores. That homeless outcast got little human sympathy; but even the despised curs of the street set an example to man, and earned once more the better half of their noble title: "The rich man's guardian and the poor man's friend."

One would have liked to have known a little more about Christ's relationship to these animals. Rubens, the famous artist, has allowed his imagination to fill in the gap. On the eastern wall of Antwerp Cathedral hangs his magnificent picture of "The Erection of the Cross." It was in 1627 that he added the most striking figure in the foreground—that of Christ's dog. It is a beautiful creature, with its head eagerly uplifted, panting with excitement and anxiety to leap up and show its affection and sympathy by its licks. One almost feels as if there were a touch of sarcasm in the artist's mind, as if he meant to say, "Here is the only friend brave enough to stick close to his Master in the hour of torture." Possibly Rubens was wrong, and He who had not where to lay His head did not possess even a dog; at any rate it could not be such as Rubens depicts; but I feel that in the

parable of Lazarus Jesus has given us a text that makes the dog preach a silent sermon to men.

First, there is its fidelity. Once when a minister was preaching, his dog entered the church and came and lay down on the pulpit stairs. The people smiled, but he quickly turned the incident to good effect. "You see," he said, "how faithful this animal is to his master, should that not make us ashamed of our disloyalty to Christ?"

In the poem "Roger and I" the beggar thus speaks of the fidelity of his dog, who stuck to him despite all his hardships—

"The rogue is growing a little old ;
Five years we have tramped through wind and
weather,
And slept out-doors when nights were cold,
And ate and drank and starved together."

Second, there is its wisdom. I was told of a Newfoundland dog which was sent back to bring two straw hats which had been left on the shore. To carry both at once seemed impossible, until the clever creature put the smaller inside the larger and thus brought both gleefully to its master.

So, you see, where there is a will there's a

way. If you are ever tempted to say that a task is impossible, think of that dog.

Third, there is its *kindness*. I believe that all animals are naturally kindly, but the condition of things, the struggle for existence, has made many fierce. When man takes rightful possession of his heritage, and the wildest parts of the earth grow rich crops, and just laws secure plenty for all, then I do not see why the lion, the tiger, and the bear may not become as domesticated as the dog. Once it was but a ravenous wolf, but kindness has drawn out its better qualities.

One illustration will show how beneath even its fierceness it possesses a goodness of heart. A Newfoundland and a mastiff were fighting on a pier, when both fell in. The Newfoundland easily swam ashore, but the breakers kept dashing the other dog against the rocks until its strength was exhausted. His old enemy, on seeing this, at once plunged in again to the rescue, and brought him to land in safety.

That teaches us to recognise the good qualities that are in animals; and just as you take trouble to cultivate a plant, if the same care is shown in the treatment of the dumb creatures it will be repaid, their better nature will overcome their fierceness, and the day of which the

prophet spoke will be hastened: "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord."

XXIX

THE LAMB

WHAT can you tell me about the lamb? I think I can easily guess. You would say first of all that it was *innocent*. That is not true of a little pup, for instance; it can sometimes be very naughty, and tear clothes with its teeth; and even a kitten in its play may scratch with its claws; but a lamb has no bad habit like that. Its white woolly coat, as well as its merry gambol, tell you at once how innocent it is. That is why in the Bible the lamb becomes a picture of Christ. You know what a model is. When a big ship is launched, the owners are presented by the builders with a small model of it, which they can keep on their table. Of course, it cannot carry any cargo or cross the ocean, but it lets them see what their vessel is like. Now every year the Israelites had to take a lamb and kill it at their Passover, and so they had always before them a model of the Cross. You remember how Isaiah describes Christ: "He is brought as a lamb to the

slaughter." Had there been one stain on His sinless soul it would have spoiled the sacrifice, but Peter speaks of Him "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

2. The lamb is *lovable*. People like to make a pet of it. The Bible gives us one homely little picture of the lamb as a pet. In a few words, Nathan describes the affection of the shepherd and his family for this little creature that was their one joy, and then he speaks of the selfish cruelty of the rich man who sent and took it that it might make a dinner for his friend. As we read, we can almost fancy we hear the sobs of the children as their little comrade is torn from them, and can understand the indignation of David as he listened to the prophet's story, and then his remorse when Nathan turned to him and said, "Thou art the man."

Look into that lonely cottage up there on the hills. The blinds are drawn, and the old man and his wife have their heads bowed in sorrow. In the next room their only son is lying dead, and in their hearts they are both crying out that God is cruel, unmerciful, to take their lamb. At last the man rises, friends are coming far next day for the funeral, and a dinner must needs be prepared for them. So he goes out

towards the sheep-fold to select and slay a lamb. A snowstorm is raging, and in the blinding drifts he sees a man standing in his path.

"Where are you going?" asks the stranger.

"To get a lamb," he replies.

"Do the sheep make any resistance?" is the next question.

"No."

The stranger gives a sigh. "That is not like mine," is what he says. "When I go to the fold to take one home, not to destroy it, but to fondle and cherish it, they cry that I am unmerciful. Is it not hard after all I have done for them?"

The old man stops astonished, but the stranger has vanished. Then he realizes that it is only a vision that he has seen, but from that hour he never complains again of the harshness of God. There are homes to-day from which the lambs have been taken. May the thought that it is the Good Shepherd Himself who has carried them into the heavenly fold bring comfort to the sorrowing hearts.

3. The lamb is *helpless*. One day a man was going along a road when a sheep came bleating wildly towards him. He felt that something was wrong, so he turned to meet it. As soon as he did this, it ran back and led him to the

bank of a pond, into which a lamb had fallen. The little creature was helpless, and if it had not been rescued by the man it would soon have been drowned.

What does God say about His people? We read in Hosea, "The Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place." Whenever we fall into sin we must remember that we cannot get out ourselves, but we must cry to Christ, and He will come and save us.

Little children, like lambs, seem very helpless, and one wonders what work God has given them to do, for we know that no one is useless. "A little child shall lead them," is a truth that one often sees fulfilled in life. Sometimes a shepherd, when he is trying to drive a flock of ewes into a fold and they are stubborn, picks up a lamb and carries it in, and then at once all the others run after it. So sometimes God makes use of the little ones in the same way. He takes one into the fold in order that the family may follow.

The helplessness of the lamb is also a picture of the worker for Christ. Jesus said, "I send you forth as lambs among wolves." What position could be more defenceless than that; yet there is safety, for the Good Shepherd is never far away, and at one glance of His

eye the wolves crouch in fear. This, however, should always keep the disciple humble. The Christian who begins to trust in himself, and boast of his own deeds or strength, is like the silly lamb who wanders away among the rocks and hills, thinking that the wolves are afraid of it instead of the shepherd.

4. The lamb is *happy*. You have watched it in the field, and been amused at its frolics, as it leaps and runs and plays, as if the world was ever so nice a place, and there was no such thing as fear or care. Now God wants to make us all as happy as that, and some day, if we love Him, we shall be. You remember how Isaiah pictures that future: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain."

XXX

THE BULL OF BASHAN

“ THE bull has broken loose ! ”

At that cry everybody ran, for there at the end of the village street stood the big brute, pawing the ground and flinging up stones and mud in its anger. Its tail was swinging and its head was lowered ; it was waiting to charge some one. Just then the clock struck three, and the big doors of the Board School opened, and the children came rushing out.

Willie Smith was a lad whom none of his teachers would have called clever, he had no memory for dates ; but he had recently been made a sergeant in the Boys' Brigade, and somehow his sense of honour demanded that he should accept the post of danger. While the others ran screaming down the street, he stopped and faced the bull. His mind was now alert ; he saw that the animal, irritated by the children, was about to charge madly into the very middle of the terrified crowd, while the farm hands who were hurrying across the fields

were still too far away to be of any help. What he caught sight of through Mrs Johnston's open window reminded him of something he had read in stories of Spanish bull-fights. It was a red table-cover that was folded over the back of a chair. In an instant he had seized it, and waving it like a flag, made for the gate that led to her back-yard. With horns lowered, the maddened creature rushed at the lad, but he had time to swing the gate open and jump behind it; then, as the bull charged in, he flung the table-cover over its head; and, before the blinded creature could free itself, he had jumped the gate and swung it to, imprisoning the trapped brute.

The bull may be strong, but you see it was outwitted by a boy's brains; and so in the Bible it is used as a picture of brutal strength. David in the 22nd Psalm, when he is thinking of the bloodthirsty men who sought his life, calls them the "bulls of Bashan." You see, Bashan was one of the most fertile parts of Palestine, where the pastures were rich, and therefore the cattle were well fed and strong. We learn from certain books that they were very fierce, so that David could scarcely have used more bitter words; and when we remember how he was hunted by cruel men from place to place,

we feel that he had a right to speak thus. Some writers see in this psalm also a picture of the sufferings of Christ, and when we think of Him as He repeated its opening words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" hanging on the Cross the victim of brutal cruelty, we may well put these words in His lips, "Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round."

The *blind rage* of the bull is what we will speak of first. When roused, it charges madly at its foe; but it is just this which offers the chance of escape, for the pursued by a quick movement may elude the horns as the creature thunders past. So here we get a lesson again about the old proverb, "Look before you leap." The boy who gets blinded by anger is almost certain to do some rash, silly thing.

This morning I was just wondering where I could get a good illustration to bring out this point, when, do you know, the post brought me a very amusing one. It was a post-card, and the writer did not sign his name, so I have no idea who he is, only I see it bears the stamp of a Glasgow office. This unknown person had been reading my sermon on the leopard, and imagined he had discovered a mistake in one of my quotations from the Bible, and, waxing indignant that a minister should make such a slip,

did not stop to think, but made a furious charge like a bull. Here is what he writes—I am chivalrous enough to believe that it is not a woman :—

“ Inaccurate quotation of the words of the Scripture jars on the ear, and is scarcely pardonable in a minister. ‘ Be ye therefore ready also,’ Luke xii. 40. Otherwise, ‘ The Leopard ’ is praiseworthy.”

Of course, if you take the trouble to look up the sermon, you will see that I quoted perfectly correctly a well-known verse from Matthew xxiv. 44, and so our good friend shows us that it is *his own* knowledge of Scripture which is at fault. After all, he has done us a very good service ; for he has given us a capital illustration of the Bull of Bashan !

Now there are a lot of hings that make us blind and impulsive. Anger is one, prejudice is another. Perhaps there is nothing which darkens the understanding more than the fanning of prejudice. It was this that blinded the priests and the scribes and the pharisees so that they did not recognise Jesus as the Son of God. It still works a great deal of evil, and when you grow up, boys and girls, you will need all your strength to struggle against its influence.

The *bellowing* of the bull is spoken of in Jeremiah l. 11, and suggests our second lesson. He pictures a field so rich in pasture that the bulls have become over-fed and wanton, and he likens that to the condition of Babylon, which was soon to be destroyed. Now selfish people, when they get all they want, imitate the bull in this: if they do not actually bellow, they grow proud and arrogant. If you are ever tempted to become like that, see a likeness of yourself in the fat bellowing bull, and feel the sense of shame. If it only knew that the gate of the clover-fields was but the beginning of the road to the slaughter-house, do you think that it would be so vain?

The *brazen* bull is also mentioned by Jeremiah, chapter lii. 20. There we read how it was one of the ornaments in the house of the Lord that was carried away by the king of Babylon. The brazen bull in the Temple suggests a great thought. What would you say this creature was an emblem of? Is it not strength? When I was in Winnipeg last year, an exciting incident took place that proved how powerful these brutes are. These were not ordinary bulls, however, but buffaloes. Forty of them were kept in a large enclosure, surrounded by a great iron fence, about twelve feet high. Visitors could look

through the bars and watch them. But one day the herd was seen to close up into what the cowboys call a "bunch." Their noses were raised, and they seemed to be sniffing some alluring scent from the prairies. Then at a given signal all heads were lowered, and they charged against the fence. Down it went under the terrific shock, and the herd, swimming the Red River, galloped off to the wild plains. It took several days to round them up and bring them back again.

For pure power of muscle the bull cannot be easily matched, and surely its image of brass in the Temple suggests the consecrating of our strength to the service of God. The boy who in a passion strikes another is using that force to insult Christ. Do not forget this picture of the bull in the house of the Lord, and see that you use your hands and your feet, your health and your strength, in working for Jesus.

XXXI

THE GOAT

"LISTEN, what lovely chimes!" said a friend to me once, when we were climbing high up amongst the Alps. Of course it was a mistake, we were too far away from any village or town to hear the peals of church steeple or tower. What we heard was the tinkle-tinkle of the thousand tiny goat-bells, as the herds of these pretty creatures browsed along the mountain sides.

Now, as we turn the pages of Scripture we may catch the echo of that sound. The pasture lands of Palestine were dotted with the roaming flocks of sheep and goats, and so the Bible, like a faithful camera, gives us pictures of this animal which has helped to feed and clothe the human race.

1. There is the *scapegoat*. Look at that scene in front of the tabernacle. Two goats are led forward to the priest. The people watch in silence, for it is their sins that compel this sacrifice. Regard for the life of even this dumb

animal keeps the priest from making any hasty decision as to which one is to die and which to live. He leaves their fate in their Creator's hands, and the choice is made through the solemn drawing of lots. The selected goat is then slain, and its blood sprinkled on the head of the other. This one is later led through the camp away out into the lonely wilderness, and there set free. Off it runs, bearing in the crimson stains upon its back the outward signs of a nation's sins.

Strange, do you say ; yes, but the key to the mystery is found in the Cross on Calvary. It was thus that the people of Israel were prepared to look for One who would not only die, but like the live goat bear their sins on His Own Person. Thus the death of Christ and also His resurrection were dimly pictured in the fate of these two goats.

2. We read of the *sure-footed goat*. In Proverbs xxx. 31 the swift and sure movement of this animal is described, and it is likened to that of a lion, a greyhound, and a king—rather a strange mixture, is it not ?

The old fable about the well may describe the simple-mindedness of the goat, but is hardly true of its feet. You remember a fox was drinking, when it slipped and fell into the

water. In vain it tried to get out, but the sides were too steep and high, and it was almost giving up in despair when a goat passed by.

"Come into this cool, refreshing well!" cried the fox.

The goat was thirsty, and the water looked tempting, so in it jumped, and in a moment the fox had leaped on its back, and thence on to the ground above.

"Ah, my friend!" he said, as he stood in safety on the brink, "if your brains had been equal to your beard, you'd have looked before you leaped." And then the cunning fellow ran away, and left the goat in the water.

Now, while it is quite true that this creature may not be so wise as many other animals, there is one thing in which it excels, and that is in the sureness of its footfold. It does look before it leaps, and will spring lightly from one precipice to another without a fall. Watch the wild goat pursued by the hunter, how it bounds from rock to rock; right up the face of the cliffs it finds its way, where no man can follow.

Another fable tells us how a wolf with watering lips saw a goat perched on a rocky shelf that overhung the valley where he was.

"Pray come lower!" he shouted. "I am very much afraid that you will fall from that

dizzy height ; and besides, the grass is much more abundant down here."

" I am much obliged for your kind invitation," was the answer, " but excuse me if I do not accept it, as I fancy that you are more concerned about your own dinner than about mine."

So, boys and girls, the only way to keep out of the reach of the wolf of sin is to climb high, is to imitate the goat. Now, the highest peaks in our lives are just the places where we meet with Christ. When we are talking with Him, we are always in a mountain apart ; temptation may lurk below, but as long as we keep there we are above it. What makes us spiritually sure-footed is prayer. With every petition we spring upward, and we only fall when we have ceased to pray.

3. The *shaggy goat* is our next point. Its coarse, hard hair is more than once spoken of in Scripture. You remember how Rebekah made gloves out of its skin and sewed them on the hands of Jacob, so that when he went in to his father, and Isaac felt his hairy arms, he imagined that it was Esau. The acted lie succeeded at the moment, but how bitterly Jacob repented of it afterwards ! I am quite sure that the very sight of goats in future must have kept the memory of his sin always fresh.

It is not only by our hands that we may deceive, but also by our faces and our tongues, and if ever you are tempted to act or say what is false, I hope that you may think of the goat, and its hair skin, and of how uncomfortable those gloves were to Jacob, not only when he had them on, but during his whole life.

“ Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive.”

4. There is the *separated goat*. It is a sad picture. We read about it in Matthew xxv. 32 : “ And before Him shall be gathered all nations ; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.”

I remember once watching two droves of sheep, which had got mixed, being sorted out. It was silently and quickly done by two clever collies. Somehow they understood what their master meant. Into the flock they ran, and not a single mistake did they make, until it divided itself into two, as if by magic.

So Christ tells us it will be on that Last Day, when all kingdoms and generations of men will gather before the Great White Throne. That mighty multitude that no man can number will be separated into two. Those on the right hand will hear the words of welcome, “ Come, ye

blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom," while those on the left will recoil with shame at the sentence. "Depart from Me." Seek now to become Christ's lamb, and you will escape that doom.

XXXII

THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

THERE is a delightful picture puzzle in the fortieth chapter of Job, beginning at the fifteenth verse. Get one of your friends to turn it up, and see if he can guess the animal that is described. You see I cannot ask you, for I have already given away the key by my title. Of course the Bible gives the creature a name, but no one is the wiser, for it is such a big, unknown word—Behemoth.

Our Church, however, had a very clever professor of Hebrew—Dr Davidson was his name—and do you know he found that this strange word really came from Egypt, and meant the water-ox? Now, we have a word which means water-horse, only it is very, very hard to pronounce. Just try and see—hippopotamus. So that must be the animal whose picture is drawn here.

The *skin* of the hippopotamus is the first thing that we note about it. Perhaps you think that the leather on your boots is thick and is

quite strong enough to protect your feet. This beast has a different opinion. It would ask for a covering ten times thicker, and perhaps then would not be satisfied. Would you like to know the weight of its skin? Suppose you saw five men each carrying a bag of coal. If all were put together, it would just equal the weight of one hide. That gives you an idea of the kind of coat this animal wears.

Once two hunters came on a herd of these creatures sporting in a river pool. They crept up with their guns so near that it was impossible to miss, and then fired forty shots. Bang, bang, bang went their rifles, but not a single hippopotamus fell dead. Why? Because the bullets only buried themselves in the hard hide. Next day they found one or two bodies floating on the surface, but that was all.

God in His goodness gives every animal, you see, a means of defence, and He has provided this one with a thick covering. We too have an enemy who is always trying to fire his shot of sin into our souls, but we may clothe them with something through which it cannot pass. What is that? The love of Christ.

"I cannot," said a little girl, when tempted to do what was wrong, "because it would hurt

Christ, and I love Him so." Through such love Satan's bullet can never penetrate.

The *safeguard* which this creature adopts suggests another thought. It does not have the whole river to itself; it has neighbours, which, I am sure, it would much rather be without. There is the crocodile with its terrible jaws and sharp teeth.

Now, I think these two must have come to some kind of a bargain, for they are never seen to fight. Perhaps the crocodile thinks the hippopotamus a little bit too tough for its digestion. Whatever the agreement is, however, Behemoth does not trust his companion over much. You see, though the parent may be as hard as leather, the little baby hippopotamus is soft and tender, and would make a tasty morsel for the crocodile. So, when the mother takes her children out for a turn, she always carries them on her back. It makes a very odd sight to see a big hippopotamus swimming along, with all its young clinging on the top of it. Well, it is a great deal wiser than many human parents who allow their children to run into all kinds of danger.

Once a traveller found the body of a crocodile away up on the branches of a tree. Do you want to know how it got there? Well, ask the

hippopotamus ! I only wish some fathers and mothers would follow that example, and pitch the evil companions of their children as far out of reach.

Its *scent* is a third feature about it. When you begin to draw a picture of this animal, why, it seems to be all nose. Hunters can never get near it from the windward side, for at once it smells their presence, and down it goes into the water, with only its nostrils peeping above. We are apt sometimes to call animals stupid, but compared with men they often show a great deal more real common sense. This big brute dives out of sight the moment it scents danger, whereas I often see young people, and old ones too, walking straight into spiritual peril. Look at that father who lets his boy handle the wine-glass, even the dull-looking hippopotamus would have more wisdom than that. It would scent the danger, and would be out of sight before you could wink ; but the son will follow his parent on and on, and you know how often the result is a drunkard's grave.

This animal's *strength* is the idea in the mind of the writer of Job. What massive limbs it has, and muscles of iron ! Such a picture of power should make us reverence the Creator of it all.

But there is one fault I have to find with the hippopotamus, and that is, the misuse it makes of its great might. It is a clumsy brute ; and at night, when it wades ashore, and starts to raid the cornfields, it tramples far more grain down under its ponderous hoofs than what it eats ; and that is saying a good deal, for at one meal it will swallow six bushels ! And sometimes, out of sheer wantonness, it will draw cattle into the river and drown them.

What a greedy brute, you say ! I wish it were the only one. There are men far worse than it. God has given them power, either in money, position, or intellect, and instead of using it for helping their fellows and raising the fallen, they think of themselves only ; and worse than that, they never heed the rights of others, but, like the clumsy hippopotamus, go on blindly, crushing them under that strength which was meant for a different purpose.

When you grow up, boys and girls, and God gives you some influence in the great world, remember this lesson, and rather sacrifice yourselves than trample under foot a fellow-being.

XXXIII

THE CAMEL

How graceful the big ships look as they glide slowly down the Clyde! Some are laden low in the water with their cargo, which will not be touched until it has crossed the ocean. It looks easy, does it not, to send goods to the ends of the earth? But there are places which the sea does not reach, there are great deserts of sand uncrossed by railways—how are men and wares carried over them? God has given us an animal, which people call “the ship of the desert.” It is the camel. How ugly it looks with the big hump on its back! Yes, but do not despise it for that, for it has been one of man’s greatest friends. It may lack the romance of the horse, for it has never charged to battle, but in following the paths of peace it has perhaps rendered greater service to men. It silently taught the lesson of brotherhood, as it linked together races whom the desert divided, and by its patient journeys helped to undo the evil caused by ignorance and jealousy.

The first lesson the Bible connects with it is one of kindness to animals. I think that one of the most attractive pictures in Scripture is that of Rebekah at the well. She sees the tired, dust-covered creatures that have plodded their weary way over the sand, and she takes pity on them. To draw water from a deep well for even one camel was no easy task, for it drinks a great amount. But she toils on and on, until the last thirsty animal has had enough. What a kind, sympathetic heart this young girl must have had to have cared so much for the poor camels! She did it without thinking that any one in particular was watching her; but God saw. He had made it one of the conditions of being the wife of Isaac, and thus a princess in Israel, that the damsel should be kind to the dumb creatures. Rebekah received her reward, and I think that this story teaches us that He who has made the animals will take notice of, and in His own way reward, all acts of kindness shown to them.

Just think how kind God Himself is to the camel! Had its feet been like those of the horse or the cow, why, they would soon have been cut up by the stony paths. But He has shod it with cushions of leather, and thus made its walking easy. You know that the camel has

to kneel when it is to be laden, how its poor knees would be hurt unless they were protected, so He has covered them also with a soft pad that they might not be injured. Another kindness has been the provision He has made for its long journeys. It has to travel for days without water, and would perish with thirst, had not the Creator given it a big inside pocket in which it can store twelve gallons of water. Even the hump is meant in kindness ; it carries within it fat on which the starving camel can feed for days. Yes, when God wishes us to be good to the dumb animals He only asks us to do what He has done Himself.

Secondly, the Bible speaks of its usefulness. As we turn its pages we get many pictures of Eastern life, and are often told of the heavy-laden processions of camels. These are of two kinds. The dromedaries are swifter than the ordinary camel, and were used mostly for carrying only men, while the latter was heavier in its make, and was the real beast of burden. Some can actually take a load weighing eight hundred pounds. Off it marches, with its long swinging stride, at the rate of about three miles an hour. Plodding, patient creature, it has no eight-hours' day, but will trudge on for sixteen or twenty hours on end, and that week after

week until the wearisome journey is completed. There we have a splendid example of perseverance. It is the boys and girls who have that camel-like instinct that succeed in life. That is the type that we want as Christians, not those who take fits and starts in the service of Christ. It is the plodding that tells. Stick to your Sabbath school, your church, whether it be wet or fine ; never for one moment lag in the work of God, and by the very force of your example you will carry others forward. Remember the words of Scripture, "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

"One step and then another,
And the longest walk is ended."

XXXIV

THE FOX

THE other day we were climbing Ben Vrackie, when we came on the half-eaten foot of a poor mountain hare. For a moment I wondered what cruel animal could have done this, when suddenly we saw skulking behind the rocks the orange-coloured back of a big fox. What a fine bushy tail it had, and sharp, clever little eyes ! In a second, however, it disappeared as if by magic, and though we searched we could not get another glimpse of the cunning creature. Now the foxes the Bible speaks of were not nearly so large ; indeed, they were little jackals, not higher than fifteen inches. But just because of that they could do all the more harm.

You know that the people in Palestine had a great many vineyards. Round these they had sometimes thick hedges or mud walls to protect the fruit from thieves. But the worst robber was the fox, and I will tell you why : it was just because he could not be seen. He dug a deep hole right under the enclosure ; and while the

owner, who was watching that no one climbed over his walls, might be thinking that his vines were safe, all the time the thievish little fox was in amongst the grapes.

So the first thing that the fox suggests is *destruction*. When the Bible speaks of the "little foxes that spoil the vines," it refers to the small sins, which perhaps we think little of, and which no one notices, but which yet in the end will destroy our character.

Some time ago I was staying with a friend who kept bees. Twice within two days there was a swarm from the same hive. As it was well stocked with honey, and was not at all overcrowded, we were surprised—until the top was taken off. Then what do you think we saw? A wasps' nest built right amongst the combs of honey! What made it more astonishing was the fact that only through one tiny hole in the roof could the mother-wasp have gained an entrance. Yet in a short time hundreds of young wasps would have been hatched, who would have stolen all the honey from the bees. No wonder those honest little workers were unwilling to stay in a home, however rich, that harboured thieves; and are you surprised that we were very angry, and killed every one of those robber wasps?

Every bad habit that you have, such as not always telling the exact truth, or losing your temper, is like harbouring a little destructive fox or thievish wasp. In later years, when your life like a highly nurtured vine should be full of sweet fruits, it will be found that even the deeds that were prompted by kindness will have had as it were the sweetest parts bitten out by these unguarded sins.

Desolation is a second thought which we connect with the fox. The word "covers" is used to describe the home of the fox. It seeks a lonely spot in which to hide. You remember how Jeremiah pictures the fate of Zion. He calls it "desolate, the foxes walk upon it." A spot where foxes roam at large must indeed be forsaken by human beings. What was it that reduced Jerusalem to such a state in the prophet's eyes? Was it not its sin, its wilful disobedience of God's commands?

There is nothing that makes one more lonely than sin. You know that when you have done anything wrong you do not like to look your father or mother straight in the face. You would rather, perhaps, stay in your room, or at least keep out of their sight. So as the years go on, the sinner always gets more lonely. Selfishness separates him even from his boon companions,

and though men may admire him for his wit or his wealth, somehow when he dies his loss is scarcely felt ; for he has lived to himself, and the picture which the prophet paints of Jerusalem becomes true of the sinner's soul. It is like one of those wild, deserted places where the foxes prowl about undisturbed.

Deceit is the third lesson which the Bible draws from the fox. Ezekiel says that " lying prophets are like the foxes in the desert." You all know how very cunning this little creature is. I have heard of a hard-pressed fox actually hiding itself in the middle of a flock of sheep ; and so the Bible warns us that it is not the place we occupy in life but what we are in ourselves that counts with God ; for while He has given us only one face, how often do men make themselves another, which is after all but a mask.

" Oh, what may man within him hide,
Though angel on the outward side ! "

Christ drew a terrible but true portrait of Herod when He called him " that fox." If, like Herod, you think you can succeed best by cheating others, you will grow up to earn from God the same scathing title that Jesus gave to that deceitful king.

Has the fox no rights other than those of being

preserved for a shameful and shocking death ? There are laws to guard it. No farmer may shoot it ; but the mockery of such legislation is only too apparent, its life is prolonged that its death may be more terrible.

There it comes at last this shielded victim of British law. We hear the baying of the hounds, we see the swift moving pack racing across the field, and there is the fox. Its tongue hangs limp from its jaws, its eyes are wild with fear, and it can scarcely drag its limbs another yard from the ravenous teeth of its pursuers. Then we turn away, for only eyes hardened in cruelty can gaze upon that scene ; but we cannot deafen our ears to the dying shriek, half-human in its piteous appeal, as with its last breath it seems to lodge its wrongs at a higher bar than that of man. The purpose of its creation was not the brutalising of man. The reason that such things exist to-day, and others even worse, is because the Christian conscience has not yet become awakened to its responsibility. Men will go on beating, and maiming, and torturing the dumb beasts, and think it no wrong as long as Christian people look on unmoved. But the moment that the spirit of Jesus, whose appreciative eye marked the kindness of the outcast dogs in their licking of Lazarus' sores,

finds true expression in public opinion, and acknowledges the rights of animals, then the bully will slink away in shame, the blood-thirsty passion will cease, and the natural treaty between man and beasts receive its final ratification.



BS
663
M2

501850
Mackinson
Bible zoo

M. Mackinson

Ap18'17

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



48 457 247